



# The War against Ukraine, Europeanization, and Impact on Cultural Heritage Narratives in the Candidate Countries

Adrian G. Corpădean and Laura M. Herța  
(Editors)

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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**Conf. univ. dr. Elena Grad-Rusu**

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**Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai**  
**Presa Universitară Clujeană**  
**Director: Codruța Săcelean**  
**Str. Hasdeu, nr. 51**  
**400371 Cluj-Napoca, România**  
**Tel./fax: (+40)-264-597.401**  
**E-mail: editura@ubbcluj.ro**  
**<http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/>**

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# **Cultural Heritage Narratives, Europeanization, and the War in Ukraine. Introduction and Structure of the Book**

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*Laura M. Herța, Adrian G. Corpădean*

The war of aggression launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022 has engendered more than widespread material destruction and massive turmoil in European affairs, with the EU's member and candidate states' loyalty to the actions taken against the assailant not failing to reach the limelight. From the breadth of sanctions to the voicing of open condemnation before international bodies, such states have exhibited different views in the context of war fatigue, domestic discontent and traditional allegiances towards one or the other party openly involved in the

hostilities, which has resulted in worrying prospects regarding the continued support Ukraine is in dire need of in order to reclaim its territory and tackle reconstruction. On the other hand, Russia's contestation of Ukrainian identity and cultivation of (frozen) conflicts throughout the EU's neighbourhood poses a threat to the perceptions of genuineness of the cultural patrimony and to the societal fabric of several countries that have advocated for future EU membership. This threat manifests itself in both a physical form, given the devastation of the war, and as a contestation of the authenticity and sense of belonging of the rich and exceptionally diverse patrimonial fabric of such countries as Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia.

Our volume brings together political scientists, historians, anthropologists and experts on international relations and the cultural patrimony of the countries envisaged, and groups together analyses on the subject matter. The aim of the book is to rekindle interest in the study of the preservation of the cultural patrimony in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. Methodological insights, as well as case analyses, are included in this volume.

One main concept tackled here, around which cases studies revolve, is *Europeanization*, which is understood as a process and as a constructivist interpretation of EU's capacity to set and export norms, and to shape behaviours. Therefore, as explained in other books and articles<sup>1</sup>, the European Union, as regional

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1. Laura M. Herța, "In the EU we Trust! The Role of Civil Society in Policy Making and Europeanization in Montenegro", *Civil Szeemle/Civil Review*, issue 77, 4/2023 pp. 152-153; Laura M. Herța; Adrian G. Corpădean, "Europeanisation in the Western Balkans: Challenges and Pitfalls", in Miriam

or micro-structure, influences the agents' national policies and transfers a framework of normative knowledge and expected behaviour. However, states also purposively act in this interaction, so the agents play a role in changing or revisiting, altering the structure's key attributes or in perpetuating them. According to Radaelli, "the question is not one of assessing whether a country has become Europeanised or not. [...] Europeanization demands explanation of what goes on inside the process", since "the EU may provide the context, the cognitive and normative 'frame', the terms of reference, or the opportunities for socialisation of domestic actors who then produce 'exchanges' (of ideas, power, policies, and so on) between each other."<sup>2</sup> Ian Manners introduced the idea of "normative power Europe" in 2002 and explained how EU norms are diffused. The European Union's extended normative basis has been developed ever since the 1950s, Manners showed, and five "core" norms within the ensemble of Union laws and policies can be identified: peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these, Ian Manner suggests other four "minor" norms, namely the notion of social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and the principle of good governance.<sup>4</sup> Normative

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Sette (ed.), *Europe: Critical Thinking in Critical Times*, London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research, 2021, pp. 25-41.

2. Claudio Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?", *European Integration Online Papers*, 2004, 8:16, p. 7.

3. Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2002, Volume 40. Number 2, pp. 242-243.

4. *Ibidem*. See also Yannis Stivachtis; Chris Price; Mike Habegger, "The European Union as a Peace Actor", *Review of European Studies*, 2013, Vol. 5 (3).

power rests, according to Zaki Laïdi, on “legitimacy of rules, the predictability of behavior, and especially the enforceability of accepted principles.”<sup>5</sup>

As already shown in other articles<sup>6</sup>, there is a rich and insightful scholarship centred on Europeanization. Many theoretical and methodological approaches discuss Europeanization (either as process, or as EU-ization, or as rational calculation for optimizing foreign policy goals, some treat it as a phenomenon, others as part of institutionalism). In our approach we undertake a social-constructivist framework. Constructivist scholars have focused on the ways in which the European Union acts, both regionally and globally, as a norm-setting organization that is able to transfer a body of normative load, which includes principles, values, rules and expected behaviours, to its neighbouring areas.<sup>7</sup> At their turn, countries included in the EU neighbourhood or EU

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5. Zaki Laïdi, “European preferences and their reception”, in Zaki Laïdi (ed.), *EU Foreign Policy in a Globalized World. Normative power and social preferences*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 43.

6. Herța, “In the EU we Trust!...”, p. 153.

7. Nathalie Tocci, *The EU and Conflict Resolution. Promoting Peace in the Backyard*, Routledge, 2007; Florent Parmentier, “The reception of EU neighbourhood policy”, in Zaki Laïdi (ed.), *EU Foreign Policy in a Globalized World. Normative power and social preferences*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008; Zaki Laïdi, “European preferences and their reception”, in Zaki Laïdi (ed.), *EU Foreign Policy in a Globalized World. Normative power and social preferences*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008; Thomas Risse, “Social Constructivism and European Integration”, in Antje Wiener; Thomas Diez (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; Laura M. Herța; Delia Pop-Flanța, “Public Perception on the Western Balkan States’ Accession to the EU. Social-Constructivist Interpretations”, *Studia UBB Europaea*, 2021, (LXVII).

candidate countries are able to gradually internalize the normative framework and re-shape their behaviour according to the EU's norms and rules. Such re-shaping would occur both exogenously and endogenously, since countries would pay attention to EU expectations and conditionality, but they would also genuinely and incrementally incorporate values, principles, norms, based on their adherence to and strong belief in the latter's validity and legitimacy.<sup>8</sup>

The structure of the book consists in four parts: the first one offers introductory and theoretical insights into the issues pertaining to cultural heritage narratives and the war in Ukraine, while the other three parts includes case-studies on Ukraine, the Western Balkan countries, and the Republic of Moldova. The chapter written by Robert Belot, titled *Justifying War through History and Heritage. The Example of Russia's Aggression against Ukraine*, focuses on Putin's speeches and the ways in which the latter attempts to justify the military aggression by bringing the complex historical development of the Ukrainian identity into the question. The chapter argues that Russia uses a combination of gaslighting and denialism in order to show how the aggression is a response to an attack, in fact, in order to construct a false reality about the war. Moreover, the author argues that this conflict is also a *conflict of memories*, as revealed by two competing and clashing readings of history and that Putin's aim is to discredit the way in which Ukraine has been attempting to reclaim its past, liberating it from the Soviet historical narrative, after the demise of USSR.

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8. Herța; Corpădean, *op. cit.*, 2021.



The second part of the book focuses on the case of Ukraine and comprises different approaches on the cultural heritage narratives and the impact of the European Union. The chapter written by Adrian G. Corpădean, *The shared patrimony of Romania and Ukraine in the shadow of Russia*, delves into the past and present of Romanian-Ukrainian relations, so as to emphasise the considerable potential for cooperation, in the light of the mutual rediscovery rekindled by the onset of Russia's war of aggression as of February 2022. The author argues that despite the numerous hurdles inherited from the history they share, the two countries now have the opportunity to become aware of the USSR's, then Russia's intentions and actions aiming to maintain animosity between them, thus serving its regional interests, as a prerequisite for overcoming the complicated files that stem from the shared border, controversial projects and different approaches to the rights of their national minorities. The common patrimony that has been acknowledged amid the convergent Romanian-Ukrainian positions and interests during the current war chiefly stems from the richness of the border communities, whose projects are briefly analysed in this chapter, set against the background of the EU support provided to endeavours implemented by a member state and a recently recognised candidate. From demographic data to matters pertaining to minority languages and rights, the patrimonial assets Romania and Ukraine are now committed to managing jointly down the EU integration path are regarded by the author as genuine cornerstones of the future cross-border relations that

depend, however, on the outcome of the war waged by Russia against Ukraine.

The chapter entitled *The birth of the Cult of Our Lady of Kyiv in Naples. An emergency ritual in wartimes*, written by Giovanni Gugg, starts with a very interesting event: in the very first days of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, when Kiev was being bombed and the inhabitants took refuge underground, a Slovakian photographer took a photo of a mother breastfeeding her newborn and published it on Instagram; within a few days, a digital artist from Dnipro transformed it into a graphic version (like a painting or an Orthodox icon, but without sacred references) and posted it on Instagram; a few weeks later, a Neapolitan Catholic priest asked if he could use it to set up the “Sepolcro” for Holy Thursday and Good Friday 2022, adding a halo to the image, at the church of his town (Mugnano di Napoli, Italy). Since then, the ‘sacred’ image has been kept in the church of Mugnano and is an object of veneration for the community of Ukrainian refugees in the Naples area. The author then argues that the image may constitute a cult in its nascent state, but we will not know until the future. For the moment, Gugg explains, we are observing an interesting process of production and invention of a devotional practice, the evolution of which we will see over time because, obviously, it will depend on the ability with which this image manages to integrate into the territory. However, this story seems to have points of contact with a rather widespread tradition around Naples and the wider area of Southern Italy, namely that of the cult of the Madonnas “who

came from the sea”, which was once the Mediterranean, while today it is Internet.

The chapter written by Monica Meruțiu and Florina Caloianu, titled *The Role of Religion in Contemporary Russian Geopolitics: A Case Study of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*, explores the religious dimensions of the conflict in Ukraine by looking at three key areas: the relationship between the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church and how this partnership enhances Russia's soft power; the religious dynamics inside Ukraine and their centrality to Ukrainian national identity; and the use of religious rhetoric to legitimise the aggression, including the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in supporting the war. The two authors argue that studying and understanding these angles facilitate the comprehension of the ways in which religion influences both the dynamic and development of the conflict and the broader geopolitical accounts surrounding it.

The chapter written by Eugeniusz Kuznicow-Wyszyński, *The Aftermath of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict. Examining the Impact on Migration and Diasporic Communities in Ukraine Post-2022*, undertakes a different, but equally interesting approach. The author shows that the Russian aggression against Ukraine not only caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and destruction, but it also impacted the lives of millions of Ukrainians, changing the landscape of migration and diasporic communities around the world. The author argues that analyzing the impact of this conflict on Ukraine's migration and diasporic communities is crucial not only to understanding the complex consequences of the war, but

also to identifying the humanitarian, social, and political needs that will have a long-lasting impact on the future of Ukraine and its citizens. Consequently, the main goal of this study is to discuss the demographic crisis in Ukraine, presenting statistics and data on migration, internal population movements, and demographic changes in Ukraine after the 2022 war. The author also focuses on the future of migration and diasporic challenges and reflects on the challenges and prospects which may arise in the context of migration and diasporic communities of Ukraine in the coming years.

The chapter written by Cathrine Kudzai Bingisai, called *The protection of cultural heritage and tourism in the Russian-Ukraine war*, examines the complexity of the destruction of cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war. The main focus of the author is on the ways in which the war contributes to restructuring the tourism sector and socio-economic development. Moreover, this study argues that the destruction of cultural heritage by armed conflicts adversely affects cultural heritage tourism. Using a qualitative methodology approach, the study uses secondary data sources to present and analyse the protection of cultural heritage and cultural heritage tourism in the Russian-Ukraine war. The document analysis comprises a review of documents related to protecting cultural heritage and cultural heritage tourism in Ukraine. The chapter concludes by showing that it is vital to prioritise the protection of cultural heritage in order to promote socio-economic development through cultural heritage tourism.

Alexandru Mocernac, in his study *Integration without accession: Ukraine's path to EU membership amidst conflict*, concentrates on the

potential pathway Ukraine could take toward integration with the European Union, even in the absence of full membership. The author's goal is to shed light on the viability of an alternative form of integration and the steps that could bridge the gap between aspiration and reality by analyzing current geopolitical dynamics, the existing EU enlargement framework, and the domestic reforms under way in Ukraine.

The third part of the book engages the readers into developments and degrees of Europeanization in some countries from the region called the Western Balkans. Two studies focus on the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, while another one deals with the cases of Montenegro and Serbia. The chapter written by Osman Sušić, *Is Bosnia and Herzegovina "Russia's island" in Western Balkans?*, focuses on Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is considered the most vulnerable country in the Western. The author argues that Bosnia and Herzegovina's status as a potential "Russia's island" in the Western Balkans is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, geopolitical, and strategic factors going back in time, when Russia positioned itself as a protector of Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans.

The study called *Bosnia's Road to EU Integration: The constitution of B&H between two conflicting narratives; man as a member of ethnic group vs. man as a citizen*, written by Berina Beširović, examines the complexities of the Bosnian Constitution. The author shows how the Dayton Peace Agreement, which concluded the war against Bosnia and Herzegovina, serves as state Constitution even 28 years after the war. According to Beširović, as a mean of stopping the war, this Agreement is an example of successful international

diplomacy. However, as a legal framework for the whole political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina it appears to be a great burden, especially in terms of EU integration. The author examines how the Constitution, meant to please the parties to the conflict, prioritized ethnic distribution of political power, which deeply bureaucratized in last three decades. This study analyses how Annex 4 (The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina) of Dayton Peace Agreement is in coalition with democratic principles and the principles of European Union. One of the most important conditions set for B&H EU integration is implementation of judgements by European Court of Human Rights in terms of election processes and ethnic/national discrimination. The author analyses how lack of constitutional reforms is a result of “waking possible new conflict” narrative, making Bosnia and Herzegovina nondemocratic. Beširović argues that for domestic law to successfully comply with EU law, B&H is obliged to constitutional reform.

In their chapter, *Re-Imagining Security after Russia's War against Ukraine. The Cases of Serbia and Montenegro*, Laura Herța and Ramona Neagoș focus on two other countries from the region, as the title suggests. The study is built around the following research questions: Who are the security providers in Montenegrin perception? Who are the security providers in Serbian perception? What referent of security is prevailing in the Serbian and in the Montenegrin discourse? Which of the following approaches on security (national, societal or human security) are rather emphasized in political discourse? The authors argue that the Russian war against Ukraine has brought back the Realist state-centric

arguments and the idea of survival, as key national interest, but many global threats and developments brought about by globalization still make the people-centred views, in terms of security, as important as state-centred ones.

The fourth part of the book concentrates on the case of the Republic of Moldova and includes two interesting studies. The first one, entitled *Soviet Legacy in the Republic of Moldova*, written by Sergiu Musteață tackles The Republic of Moldova's transition from totalitarianism to democracy. The author argues that this is marked by national consciousness and confrontation with the Soviet legacy and that both have direct links to the identity and historical past of this new political entity's inhabitants. However, Musteață emphasizes, the relationship between national identity, statehood, and the past in the Republic of Moldova represents a special situation, because the totalitarian regime has left in its wake a deep imprint on these fields. To justify their political decisions, Soviet authorities have fabricated, forged, and disseminated several historical myths and facts that to a large extent belong to the national identity sphere. The chapter debates competing memories, the Soviet legacy, and the collective memory in the Republic of Moldova. The second one, written by Gianina Joldescu-Stan, *Moldova and Romania. Narratives towards a Cultural European Integration*, looks at the complex interplay between national and supranational identities by exploring how Moldova and Romania perceive and negotiate their cultural identities in the context of European integration. The goal of this chapter is twofold: the examination of the multifaceted elements that fuel the Republic

of Moldova's aspiration to achieve cultural integration within the European Union and the analysis of Moldova's inherent strengths and potential vulnerabilities in this intricate process.

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# Justifying War through History and Heritage. The example of Russia's aggression against Ukraine

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*Robert Belot*

## Introduction

Are we now living in a post-truth era? This is the crucial question for human and social sciences concerned with the sudden return of war to the European continent, and one I will endeavour to begin exploring in this article.

The President of the Russian Federation has continued to argue that the war is justified on historical grounds. However, his rhetoric has nothing to do with seeking 'historical truth' and even less the code of ethics observed by any professional historian. In

fact, it is an abridged version of the historical falsehoods contained within the article he published a few months before the invasion of Ukraine, on 12 July 2021: ‘On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.’<sup>1</sup> It is this manipulation and falsification of history that I will examine in this article.

Such falsehoods are an indication of the contempt for history and the Other (their history, their identity, their culture, their heritage) that is the striking feature of this war. It stems from a longstanding collective depiction of Ukraine that dates back to the birth of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and its policy of regional domination. It continued under Sovietism and has been given a new lease of life under Vladimir Putin in the form of various territorial assaults and annexations. The Russia-Ukraine war is not just about territory; it is also about memory. It is a war of culture. It is a reminder that heritage is an element in the matrix forming the representational system of society and is therefore a geopolitical issue. The relationship with memory is indicative of and a potential cause of confrontations based on identity.

In this article, I will examine this notion from the perspective of the symmetry to be found between Putin’s counternarrative<sup>2</sup> of Russia and Ukraine’s history and the problems and failures encountered by the independent Ukraine in its attempt to create

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1. Vladimir Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainian”, 12 July 2021. The English version of the document contains 6,885 words. Throughout the document, I have used the official English language version of this article for reference: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

2. I mean “alternative narrative”, or “false narrative”.

its own collective memory and its own heritage – such problems and failures being one of the sources of Russia’s counternarrative.

### **An example of historical ‘gaslighting’**

The article published by the Kremlin on 12 July 2021 is an excellent example of what is today known as ‘gaslighting’ (*Merriam-Webster’s* 2022 word of the year). The term comes from the film *Gaslight* directed by John Cukor in 1944. A man (Charles Boyer) manipulates his wife (Ingrid Bergman), making her believe she is losing her mind in order to steal the precious jewellery she had inherited. By extension, it might be said that it is a form of cognitive hijacking or a hijacking of history / memory in an attempt to invert reality. The aggressor is presented as the *aggressee*, accusing the victim of being guilty of a crime they have not committed.

In his article, Putin describes Ukraine as an ‘aggressor state’ which, he alleges, has forgotten (and betrayed) its historic ties with Russia. He accuses the Ukrainian authorities of *denialism* when his own narrative is a perfect example of denialist construction. He claims that the Ukrainian authorities are suffering from a serious disease (‘Nazism’, weakness, corruption, negligence, cultural inexistence, lack of identity, etc.). ‘Gaslighting’ in general is a form of manipulation serving to make the victim doubt their own memory, their heritage, their perception of reality and their mental health. Putin’s narrative is in fact a continuation of a longstanding col-

lective depiction of Ukraine as a province of Russia with its own dialect but unworthy of being recognised as a nation state with an indigenous history and culture. This is a strategy seeking to establish subordination.

The combination of gaslighting and denialism is perfectly illustrated in an episode which will go down in history as a dis-information howler:

On 23 May 2023, Putin received Valery Zorkin, President of Russia's Constitutional Court, at the Kremlin. Zorkin had something important to reveal to the world. The moment was filmed by the Kremlin and posted on social media. This senior figure from Russia's state institutions indicated a French map of Europe dating back to the time of Louis XIV and explained, "I would like to take this opportunity to say that we found a copy of a map from the 17<sup>th</sup> century at the Constitutional Court. It was made by the French during the reign of Louis XIV and dates from the middle or the beginning of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Why have I brought it with me today? Mr President, there is no Ukraine on this map..." Putin appeared delighted and hastened to recite his anti-history catechism: "The Soviet Government created Soviet Ukraine. This is very well-known by all. Until that time, Ukraine had never existed in the history of humanity."<sup>3</sup>

This was the supposed proof that Ukraine did not exist at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Russia was already a recognised power. Propaganda is a weapon of mass destruction of

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3. <https://www.businessinsider.com/putin-claims-map-proves-ukraine-not-real-despite-saying-ukraine-2023-5>

the truth. As Peter Pomerantsev wrote, “Nothing is True and Everything is Possible.”<sup>4</sup>

In my view, it has been difficult for Ukraine to emerge as a nation state because of its complex history. Putin uses this complexity as the basis for his argument that a Ukrainian identity separate from Russia does not exist. It is true that Ukraine’s history has been marked by a ‘lack of continuity’.<sup>5</sup> Before 1991 and access to independence, it is generally accepted that ‘Ukrainians’ only existed in political and state terms on three occasions: as part of the Kievan Rus between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries; within the autonomous republic of the Zaporozhian Cossacks from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; and from 1917 to 1920 in chaotic conditions owing to the war and the Bolshevik Revolution. This is why Ukraine sought to reconstruct its history and redefine its cultural heritage after 1991. However, constructing heritage on the basis of ‘heroes’<sup>6</sup> risks falsification, denial and exoneration of the most deplorable episodes in the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Putin has been able to use for

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4. Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*, New York, PublicAffairs, 2014. Pomerantsev was born in Kyiv. He went on to acquire British nationality before becoming a researcher at Johns Hopkins University.

5. Jean-Bernard Dupont Melnyczenko, « Naissance et affirmation de la conscience nationale ukrainienne, 1850-1920 », *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, No. 43, 1996. « Nation, nationalités et nationalismes en Europe de 1850 à 1920 (II) », edited by René Girault, p. 36.

6. David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine*, New edition [online]. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007 (generated on 10 December 2023). Available online: <<http://books.openedition.org/ceup/523>>. ISBN: 9786155211355.

his own purposes the excesses and aberrations of the national/nationalist story Ukraine has sought to write to construct a memory-based identity following independence.

## Ukraine's 'Memorial Building'

This conflict is also a *conflict of memories* underpinned by two contradictory and clashing readings of history. Putin's aim is to discredit the way in which post-Communist Ukraine is attempting to reclaim its past, liberating it from the Soviet historical narrative. Ukraine has begun the 'nation building' process, i.e. constructing (or reconnecting with) an indigenous historical narrative responding firstly to a pressing need for political, or even ontological, affirmation. I have suggested that this approach might be called 'memorial building'.<sup>7</sup> This does not refer simply to an academic exercise in historical clarification or involve casting a nostalgic gaze over a distant heritage. The aim is to create a collective memory establishing the virtues of national unity, as well as redress for a past which denied Ukraine its right to political/cultural existence and geographical recognition. In this instance, it is my view that the meaning of *memorial* exceeds the usual idea of a monument constructed to represent a memory frozen in time within a tangible object. Rather, this memorial is a (re)founding moment creating

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7. Robert Belot; Philippe Martin (eds.), *Patrimoine, Péril, Résilience*, Paris, Maisonneuve&Larose/Hémisphères, 2022.

a system and a presence through a narrative identity imagined as a resource of resilience and palingenesis. Ukraine's case is unusual – according to the historian Volodymyr Kravchenko, as its existence as a sovereign state has been episodic and limited, it is 'seeking its "golden era" and "usable past" that would provide it suitable symbolic capital for its current nation- and state-building process.'<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that to a certain extent its history was 'stolen' as a result of Soviet/Russian cultural domination/colonisation, something demonstrated in school textbooks and Ukraine's scant historiography.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to recognise that Ukraine's memory has long been "confiscated, if not obscured." However, it should also be acknowledged that its attempts to reclaim its memory have been "imperfect": "In seeking to establish a definitive separation from Russia and highlight the longstanding resistance of a nation, Ukraine has seized upon powerful figures and symbols from its tormented past. Although considered heroic, some of those individuals nonetheless remain controversial."<sup>10</sup>

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8. Volodymyr Kravchenko, "Fighting Soviet Myths: The Ukrainian Experience", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 34 (1/4), 2015, p. 447-484.

9. Georges Nivat, Vilen Horsky and Miroslav Popovitch (eds.), *Ukraine, renaissance d'un mythe national*, Proceedings of the Poltava Conference edited by the Institut européen de l'Université de Genève, Geneva, 2000.

10. A remarkable conference was held in Poltava in the spring of 1997. Its proceedings were published in Geneva in 2000, i.e., before Putin's regime. It was the first entirely independent attempt by academics to shed light on Ukrainian history and its relationship with Russia. See also: Bertrand de Franqueville; Adrien Nonjon, « Mémoire et sentiment national en Ukraine », *La vie des idées*, 17 May 2022: [laviedesidees.fr](http://laviedesidees.fr).



Ukraine's quest for pre-Russian origins and its attempt to create a new national mythology were reflected, for example, in Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's decision to award the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise to Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee, on 11 September 2021. Brought to power by the Polish, Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054) reigned at a time when the Kievan Rus was at its peak. The fact that he was nicknamed 'father-in-law of Europe' speaks volumes.<sup>11</sup> In 2008, viewers of a popular Ukrainian television programme voted him 'greatest Ukrainian of all time' and his achievements were depicted in a film two years later. In this instance, the aim was to provide a narrative that, unlike Putin's, did not freeze Ukraine's history in 1654 (the date of the Pereyaslav Agreement), the year which marked the beginning of Russia's attempts to subordinate the Kievan Rus.<sup>12</sup>

However, its other borrowings from the past have been more problematic. Some of its 'revivals' (such as Stepan Bandera and Symon Petlyura for example) have caused a scandal and bolstered Putin's narrative of the 'Nazification' of Ukraine and the need to 'denazify' its history.

It is accepted that national identities are not natural but rather 'constructions.'<sup>13</sup> All forms of nationalism are a construction of a

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11. James S. Olson (ed.), *An ethnohistorical dictionary of the Russian and Soviet empires*, London, Greenwood Press, 1994, p. 676.

12. However, it should be acknowledged that protection was required against the Polish who were pursuing an expansionist policy at that time.

13. See Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales Europe, XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, éd. du Seuil, 1999.

founding myth where history is pieced together and arranged into the correct order. All forms of nationalism, both in the past and today, worship at the altar of the 'idol of origins' to quote Marc Bloch in his wise *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien*. To borrow the distinction made by the American historian Timothy Snyder, 'modern' forms of nationalism seek to establish *ex-post* historical/ cultural linearities with 'proto-modern nations', at the risk of resorting to 'metahistorical' myths<sup>14</sup> or, as Henry Corbin (Martin Heidegger's translator) put it, 'hiero-historical' myths.<sup>15</sup> In this instance, Ukrainians want to suggest that they are the only heirs to the Kievan Rus.

At the centre of pan-Russian nationalism lies the ancient myth of the Russian 'triune' created by metropolitan and archbishop Feofan Prokopovich (1681-1736), a professor at Kiev Mohyla Academy. He was adviser to Peter the Great who had given himself the title of 'Tsar of Great, Little and White Russia.' This historical myth has surfaced again today as the basis for Russia's ancient 'right' to possess Ukraine.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1559-1999*, Newhaven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 28-29.

15. Riyad Dookhy, « Un messianisme historial ? », *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* [Online], 37 | 2015, placed online on 3 December 2018, consulted on 15 April 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/cps/480>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/cps.480>.

16. On the history of this myth and its historical manipulations, see: Denis Eckert, « D'où vient l'idée que Russes et Ukrainiens forment un seul peuple? », *Mondes sociaux*, published on 04/04/2022, <https://sms.hypotheses.org/29931>. Denis Eckert also translated a seminal book by Andreas Kappler (in German): *Ungleiche Brüder: Russen und Ukrainer vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich, CH Beck, 2017.

## Cultural war and battle for origins

In his article ‘On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians’, Russia’s President proposes a counternarrative of the history of Russia and Ukraine’s relationship.

Russia’s current official narrative rests on a presupposition that Putin presents as historically undeniable: ‘historical unity between Russians and Ukrainians.’ In brief, Ukrainians and Russians form ‘one people – a single whole’ whose separation can be explained only by Western strategy, thanks to which ‘step by step, Ukraine was dragged into a dangerous geopolitical game aimed at turning Ukraine into a barrier between Europe and Russia.’ According to Putin’s reading of history, at the centre of this unity lies the ancient Rus.<sup>17</sup> This was not purely a political space. It was also, according to Putin, a religious space. He writes: ‘and – after the baptism of Rus – the Orthodox faith. The spiritual choice made by St. Vladimir, who was both Prince of Novgorod and Grand Prince of Kiev, still largely determines our affinity today.’ That is why 28 July has been a national holiday in Russia since 2009. It celebrates the ‘baptism of Russia’ which, it is claimed, took place on 28 July 988. The problem is that the principality of Kiev was not Russia which

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17. ‘Rus’ (in the era of the Kievan Rus) referred to the Rus’ itself (the lands of Kyiv and Chernihiv). ‘All Rus’ referred to the lands governed by the Princes of Kyiv whose power was relatively real. See also: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia/myth-11-peoples-ukraine-belarus-and-russia-are-one>.

did not yet exist at that time, or only in an undetermined form.<sup>18</sup> According to Putin, it is the West who 'in recent years', supposedly built a 'wall' between the two countries which, he purports, formed 'the same historical and spiritual space'. For Putin, this wall is 'a great common misfortune and tragedy' because, as he puts it, the axiom that 'Ukraine is not Russia' is a Western invention, a manipulation, a negation of history. It is this axiom that he seeks to deconstruct. His purpose is therefore both historical and messianic: he seeks to recreate the unity of two peoples certified by history... by declaring war on Ukraine.

It should be noted that Vladimir Putin did not invent this 'myth'. According to the researchers (mostly Ukrainians) who attended the Poltava conference in 1997, it became set in stone during the Soviet era: 'Canonical Soviet textbooks brazenly falsified history – consider for example [...] the entirely false 'theory' of the earlier existence of a united nation composed of Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians.'<sup>19</sup>

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18. Vladimir Berelowitch, « Les origines de la Russie dans l'historiographie russe au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle », *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, vol. 58, No. 1, 2003, p. 63-84. The city of Kyiv's culture sparkled while Moscow was in limbo. In the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was a small village on the banks of the Moskva. What became Russia was under Mongol rule. Prince Alexander Nevsky only managed to make Moscow an independent principality in 1263. It would quickly go on to compete with its neighbours.

19. And the quotation continues thus: "... and the total omission of the famine from 1932 to 1933, as well as the falsification of the history of the Second World War (not a word on the rebel Ukrainian army or the millions of Ukrainians held in captivity." Leonid Finberg, « Rapports entre Ukrainiens et Juifs : comment la mythologie remplace la réalité », *Ukraine, renaissance d'un mythe national*, op.cit., p. 148.

Ukrainians have taken action against such a historical annexation. In 2021, Ukraine celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence and President Volodymyr Zelensky decreed that 28 July would be a public holiday known as 'the Day of Ukrainian Statehood.'<sup>20</sup> It was marked for the first time on 28 July 2022, i.e., five months after the Russian invasion. In June 2023, the Ukrainian Parliament voted to move the Day of Ukrainian Statehood from 28 July to 15 July, not only to avoid clashing with the date chosen by the Russians but also in an abandonment of the Julian calendar in favour of the Gregorian one. On 28 July 2024, Zelensky issued a decree that moved the Christmas public holiday to 25 December (instead of 7 January) in an attempt to end Christmas' alignment with the liturgical calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church, i.e., 7 January. It is evident that Ukraine's symbolic and historical heritage is far from set in stone and very much a political issue.

Ukraine's desire to reclaim its memory of the principality of Kiev (where Ukrainian culture originated) was evident in France back in 2005. Viktor Yushchenko, then President of Ukraine, visited Senlis to inaugurate a statue erected in memory of Anne of Kyiv, Queen of France, who was suddenly thrust into the media spotlight. In 1051, Anne of Kyiv, daughter of Yaroslav the Wise (978-1054), Grand Prince of Kiev, Prince of Novgorod and Prince of Rostov, and his second wife Ingegerd of Sweden, married Henry I, King of France. Henry I (1008-1060) was the third of the Capetian

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20. <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/den-ukrayinskoyi-derzhavnosti-28-lipnya-utverdzhuvati-mezya-76645>

line. A Kievan woman was therefore indeed Queen of France.<sup>21</sup> This demonstrates the importance of the Kievan Rus, its influence and its place at the heart of Europe in the Middle Ages.<sup>22</sup> That is why the Ukrainian authorities today present Yaroslav the Wise as a European pioneer and the 'greatest Ukrainian of all time', while feeding 'the myth of the constant ambition of reunification.'<sup>23</sup>

In Putin's supposedly historical article, the 'triune' myth enables him to diminish (even deny) Ukraine's Polish past ('the Republic of Two Nations'), as well as its Austrian past, despite Galicia being the home of Ukraine's cultural and political nationalism.<sup>24</sup> With a sweep of his hand, he dismisses 'the old groundwork of the Polish-Austrian ideologists to create an "anti-Moscow Russia".' Is Ukraine's Austrian history really an 'invention'?

It is this denial of history which leads him to annex Ukraine's cultural heritage. I will consider two examples Putin refers to in his article.

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21. Régine Desforges reimagines his fate in the form of an historic novel: *Sous le ciel de Novgorod*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.

22. Yaroslav the Wise ordered the construction of the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Kyiv. The first code of justice, a source of medieval law, was produced during his reign: *Rousskaïa Pravda*.

23. Natalia Iakovenko, 'Modifications du mythe national ukrainien dans l'historiographie', in *Ukraine, renaissance d'un mythe national*, op. cit., p. 124.

24. Isabel Röskau-Rydel, « La société multiculturelle et multinationale de Galicie de 1772 à 1918 : Allemands, Polonais, Ukrainiens et Juifs », *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Section des sciences historiques et philologiques* [Online], 139, 2008, placed online on 26 November 2008, consulted on 20 November 2023, <http://journals.openedition.org/ashp/469>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ashp.469>.

## **A divisive ‘common literary and cultural heritage’**

One writer in particular has been caught up in a diplomatic paternity dispute: Nikolay Gogol (1809-1852), author of *Taras Boulba*, a famous novella. Gogol came from an old Cossack family (in the Poltava region) but left for St Petersburg to pursue his literary career. He always wrote in Russian – at that time, how could a writer succeed outside Russia’s rapidly developing literary circles? Russia was a dominant and recognised power, including culturally. So, for some people Gogol is Russian; for others he is Ukrainian. Vladimir Putin is happy to use him in his article to advance his argument: ‘The books of Nikolay Gogol, a Russian patriot and native of Poltavshchyna, are written in Russian, bristling with Malorussian folk sayings and motifs.’<sup>25</sup> How can this heritage be divided between Russia and Ukraine? And why do it?’

This paternity dispute came to light on the day marking the bicentenary of Gogol’s birth in 2009, i.e. before the occupation of Crimea and the war. Some of Gogol’s work had been republished in Ukrainian and Rossia (a Russian state television channel) accused Kyiv of trying to ‘Ukrainianise’ the anniversary. Russian Gogol specialists criticised the fact that the adjective ‘Russian’ had been systematically replaced with ‘Ukrainian’ or ‘Cossack’. In point of fact, the Western half of the country stopped studying Russian in 1991 so Gogol was no longer read. The new edition

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25. *Malorussia* refers to Ukrainian ‘little Russians’.

in Ukrainian sought to resolve that problem. However, in such a highly sensitive atmosphere translations can become controversial and political. Should it not be considered that Gogol represented a powerful weapon for those who sought to denigrate Ukraine's autonomous existence?<sup>26</sup>

In seeking to reclaim its history and its culture, Ukraine has showcased a figure from Ukraine's cultural renaissance: Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), a painter and poet but also a Ukrainian hero and martyr. He sought to codify Ukrainian grammar and establish modern Ukrainian literature. As a result, he was sent to prison and subsequently lived in exile in St Petersburg where he died.<sup>27</sup> For the Russian authorities, literary activities and young intellectuals posed a threat. A report from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century included the following wonderful homage to the power of culture and ideas: "In Ukraine, Slavophiles have become Ukrainophiles. The members of this brotherhood wanted to separate Ukraine from Russia. Of all its members, Shevchenko is the most dangerous because, as a poet, he can speak directly to the popular masses."<sup>28</sup>

Shevchenko criticised the Russian Empire's policy of subjugation and became a symbol of cultural resistance in Ukraine.

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26. Iryna Dmytrychyn, « Voyage dans l'Ukraine de Gogol », *Revue de littérature comparée*, 2009/3 (No. 331), p. 283-294. DOI: 10.3917/rhc.331.0283. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-de-litterature-comparee-2009-3-page-283.htm>.

27. Christianity was introduced into Kievan Rus' by the monk Cyril who translated Byzantine religious documents into the Slavonic language and introduced the Cyrillic alphabet.

28. Roger Portal, *Russes et Ukrainiens*, Paris, Flammarion, 1970, p. 45.



Two years after his death, a memorandum from the Russian Government decreed that “there has never been, there is not and there cannot be any specific ‘little Russian’ language.” And yet, specialists have confirmed that ‘although all the Slavic languages are very similar, Ukrainian is closer to Polish than Russian in some respects.’ Ukrainian cannot be reduced to simply a dialect of Russian.<sup>29</sup> The Ems Ukaz was a perfect example of this repressive policy. The decree accused Ukrainians of wanting to live in a free Ukraine “in the form of a republic led by a hetman.” Alexandre II (1818-1881) outlawed the printing of books in Ukrainian, the importing of Ukrainian books into the Russian Empire, the creation of original works in Ukrainian, and the translation of foreign language texts into Ukrainian. The prohibition would remain in force until the 1905 Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

Putin refers to Shevchenko in his article but only to state that, although his poems were mostly written in Ukrainian, he wrote “prose mainly in Russian”, making him part of “our common literary and cultural heritage.” Thus does he deny Shevchenko’s symbolic place in Ukraine’s popular imagination and, above all, bolster the myth of the triune. Ukrainians would go on to revolt against such a Tsarist assimilationist policy and fight for their culture to be respected. However, Putin sweeps this to one side for two reasons: firstly, he believes that all national demands stem

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29. Iaroslav Lebedynsky, « La Russie a entretenu le mythe de l’inexistence de l’Ukraine », *Science et Vie*, 24 February 2023, <https://www.science-et-vie.com/article-magazine/la-russie-a-entretenu-le-mythe-de-linexistence-de-lukraine>

30. After the first Russian Revolution in 1905, Nicolas II published a manifesto promising to respect nationalities.

from nationalism and therefore from 'Naziism'; and secondly, anything that does not follow the myth of fusional unity between the two countries is rejected out of hand. It is his belief that this policy should be interpreted in light of the 'historical context' which he alleges demonstrates that Ukraine's national claims are purely a result of geopolitical manipulation by Russia's enemies, a "tool of rivalry between European states." In the past, this destabilisation operation had been led by the 'Polish national movement' and the 'Austro-Hungarian authorities.'

In his article, Putin completely ignores great national literary figures from western Ukraine with a connection to the University of Lviv such as Mykhaylo Petrovitch Drahomanov, Taras Shevchenko and Ivan Franko. He forgets Yakiv Holovatsky and Markiian Chachkevych who is recognised for adopting the civic Cyrillic alphabet to transcribe the Ukrainian vernacular into an accessible written language.

The only intellectual he does cite is Mykhaylo Hrushevsky (1866<sup>31</sup>-1934), one of the Galician exiles. This Ukrainian historian (and politician<sup>32</sup>) is often referred to as the 'father of Ukrainian historiography.'<sup>33</sup> He helped crystalise the "return to the paradigm

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31. He was born in Chełm, Poland.

32. Hrushevsky was a politically engaged intellectual. A member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, he became president of the central Rada (parliament) at the time of the 1917 revolution and, in 1918, president of the ephemeral Ukrainian People's Republic, after which he had to seek exile in Vienna. He returned to Kyiv as an academician and was arrested in 1931.

33. The following spelling is also used, including in Putin's article: Mikhaïl Grouchevski.

of the standard national myth” (Natalia Iakovenko<sup>34</sup>). Independent Ukraine’s ambition to reclaim its historical heritage has also been constructed around him. Consider for example the extravagant festivities that were held in independent Ukraine in 1996 to mark the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. Hrushevsky chaired the Shevchenko Scientific Society<sup>35</sup> (named after the man who invented the Ukrainian language), the organisation at the heart of an international network promoting the idea of Ukraine’s own culture. In 1894, Mykhaylo Hrushevsky was appointed the new Chair of Eastern European History in Lviv, Galicia. He used his freedom and academic unction to deconstruct the official Russian narrative based on the ‘uninterrupted continuity’ of the Russian state since the Middle Ages. He brought about an intellectual revolution by postulating that the Rus of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries were historically and culturally indigenous and that the Kievan Rus had its own specific and authentic history, independent of that of Russia. He wrote an 11-volume *History of Rus-Ukraine*, a monumental enterprise. The first volume was published in 1898. He was one of the first to attempt to present a historical foundation for the Ukrainian nation to provide some perspective with regard to what he called the aspiration for “a shared national life.” Mykhaylo Hrushevsky was therefore someone who represented a total refutation of Russia’s anti-Ukrainian counternarrative. As Timothy Snyder underlined, he offered Ukraine “a base for its

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34. Or ‘Yakovenko’.

35. [https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Ukraine/\\_Topics/history/\\_Texts/DORSUH/22\\*.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Ukraine/_Topics/history/_Texts/DORSUH/22*.html)

political rejection of Russian pretensions.”<sup>36</sup> That is why Putin symbolically sets about to destroy him, presenting him as a traitor to his cause. Putin lets it be understood that this emblematic figure of Ukrainian nationalism actually abandoned his political battle and returned to Russia at the end of his life in an act of disloyalty to his cause:

“In the 1920’s-1930’s, the Bolsheviks actively promoted the “localization policy”, which took the form of Ukrainization in the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>37</sup> Symbolically, as part of this policy and with consent of the Soviet authorities, Mikhail Grushevskiy, former chairman of Central Rada, one of the ideologists of Ukrainian nationalism, who at a certain period of time had been supported by Austria-Hungary, was returned to the USSR and was elected member of the Academy of Sciences.”

In Ukraine, the de-Sovietisation of its heritage became a de-Russification operation. Monuments dedicated to Alexander Pushkin were demolished (such as in the city of Uzhhorod in April 2002) and the Government sought to ‘purify’ public libraries.

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36. Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-198.

37. Soviet Socialist Republic.

## Putin: 'de-Nazifier' of Ukraine's memory

Ukraine has showcased a number of heroes in its attempts to rebuild its memory and its heritage. Patriotic heritage has always been shaped by figures it is hoped are iconic. In Ukraine, this tradition is still evolving following the wave of demolitions. It seems that the myth of the hero has had its time – which in itself is no bad thing.

However, the 'heroes' Ukraine has dusted off and brought out of its pantheon are not glorious and have triggered significant dissent. Consider, for example, one 'independence hero': Symon Petlyura. Accused of covering up unspeakable antisemitic pogroms in 1917 and 1918, he was killed by a Russian Jewish anarchist in Paris in 1926.<sup>38</sup> President Viktor Yushchenko's visit to his grave at Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris in May 2006 caused a scandal, not least in France itself.

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38. Léon Poliakov, « Petlioura : la dignité d'un mythe », *Information juive*, October 1986. Léon Poliakov did not support the theory that Petlyura was anti-Jewish. It was his view that media coverage of the Petlyura trial (in 1927) first and foremost reflected Comintern propaganda which saw it as a way to discredit Ukrainian nationalists and justify the domination of Ukraine. See also: Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999; Lidia Miliakov ed., *Le livre des pogroms. Anti-chambre d'un génocide. Ukraine, Russie, Biélorussie, 1917-1922*, French edition produced by Nicolas Werth, Mémorial de la Shoah-Calmann-Lévy, 2010; David Engel, *The Assassination of Symon Petliura and the Trial of Scholem Schwarzbard 1926-1927. A Selection of Documents*, Bristol (USA), Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016.

Another 'hero' (this time from the Second World War) is the focus of Putin's criticism. It must be said that it is a complicated and unsavoury case. It mainly serves to enable Putin to justify his campaign of presenting his war as an operation to 'denazify' Ukraine. At the heart of his anti-Nazi argument is the figure of Stepan Bandera, considered a leading Ukrainian Nazi sympathiser. This is what Putin writes: "Bandera, who collaborated with the Nazis ... [is] ranked as ... [a] national [hero].<sup>39</sup> Everything is being done to erase from the memory of young generations the names of genuine patriots and victors, who have always been the pride of Ukraine."

The decision taken by the city of Kyiv in 2016, two years after the annexation of Crimea, to rename Moscow Avenue 'Stepan Bandera Avenue' immediately after the Decommunisation Laws adopted in 2015 has come under much scrutiny.

The way in which western Ukrainians welcomed the German army as liberators in 1941, co-ran the occupation and participated in the slaughter of the Jews is problematic, as is the underwhelming attention given to Holocaust memorialisation.<sup>40</sup>

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39. In fact, "on 2 April 2010, a month after former prime minister Viktor Yanukovych was elected head of the State of Ukraine, the Administrative Court of Donetsk overturned and rescinded former president Viktor Yushchenko's decree making Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych Heroes of Ukraine. It argued that even posthumously this title could only be bestowed on citizens of the State of Ukraine which had only existed since 1991. The ruling was immediately confirmed upon appeal on 21 April 2010." <https://timenote.info/fr/Roman-Choukhevytch-30.07.1907>

40. John-Paul Himka, "Obstacles to the Integration of the Holocaust into Post-Communist East European Historical Narratives", *Canadian Slavonic*

Stepan Bandera (1909-1959) led the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). He was born on 1 January 1909 in Kalush, Galicia, a province in the east of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Like others, he sought to collaborate with the Germans against the Soviet Union to lead Ukraine towards independence. The anti-Judaism of the Nazis was not entirely displeasing to him. Ukrainian nationalists quickly realised that the Germans (who funded their movement) had no intention of helping an independent Ukraine to emerge. Bandera was imprisoned at a German concentration camp from 1941 to 1944 after attempting to establish an independent Ukrainian government. It should be noted that he was poisoned by a KGB agent in 1959 in Munich.

Putin brandishes the effigy of Bandera to suggest that modern Ukraine has learnt nothing from history and is falling victim to its old nationalist demons once again. This position was the reason for the Russian Government's manipulation of the UN on 16 November 2017 to hold a vote on its draft resolution against "the glorification of Nazism."

Nonetheless, Ukraine should have avoided leaving itself wide open to the often-justified criticism that it has been 'laundering'<sup>41</sup>

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*Papers*, 50 (3–4), 2008, p. 359-72. See: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York, Basic Books Perseus Books Group, 2012; Marc Sagnol, « Lieux oubliés de l'Holocauste en Ukraine. Berezovka, Domaniekva, Bogdanovka », *Mémoires en jeu. Revue critique interdisciplinaire et multiculturelle sur les enjeux de mémoire*, 29.04.2021. <https://www.memoires-en-jeu.com/sites-lieux/lieux-oublies-de-lholocauste-en-ukraine-berezovka-domaniekva-bogdanovka/>.

41. Delphine Bechtel, « Mensonges et légitimation dans la construction nationale en Ukraine (2005-2010) », *Écrire l'histoire* [online], 10 | 2012, placed

the darkest episodes in its history and rehabilitating 'questionable', or even shameful, figures. Consider, for example, a man like Roman Shukhevych, leader of the Nazi 'Nachtigall' battalion (created in Krakow in March 1941). His virulent anti-Polish perspective was only equalled by his treatment of Jews in Galicia where he committed mass murder.<sup>42</sup> He was made a 'hero of Ukraine' on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in 2007.<sup>43</sup> Ukrainians themselves were bitterly divided over this issue. In 2017, for example, it even led to scuffles in the street.<sup>44</sup>

However, the rehabilitation process had begun. In 2019, the Ukrainian city of Kalush unveiled a monument in honour of Shukhevych, provoking a joint reaction from the Ambassadors of Israel and Poland. In March 2021, the city of Ternopil in Ukraine renamed its football stadium after that symbol of Nazi collaborationism. The Simon Wiesenthal Center had no choice but to react and requested that FIFA condemn the decision. And yet, in July

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online on 18 December 2015, consulted on 10 December 2023, <http://journals.openedition.org/elh/199>.

42. In August 1943, Shukhevych was appointed Supreme Commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). In some biographies, he is presented as having been an 'Abwehr agent from 1937'.

43. He was awarded this title by President Yushchenko on 14 October 2007 during commemorations marking 65 years of the UPA. The decision would later be rescinded by the courts.

44. According to a 2009 opinion poll conducted by Ivan Katchanovski, a Ukrainian researcher teaching at Ottawa University, "only 13% of people questioned had a positive impression of the UPA; approximately 45% of Ukrainians had a negative impression of the insurgent army." <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/rci/fr/nouvelle/2013410/choukhevytch-honore-canada-heros-national-ukrainien-ou-criminel-nazi>



2021 Yulia Laputina, the Veterans Affairs Minister, did not hesitate to pose for pictures with a member of Pravy Sektor<sup>45</sup> in front of a portrait of Roman Shukhevych.

The Holocaust is now well-documented in Ukraine. However, a heavyweight study by the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) in 2013 was disturbed by Ukraine's revisionist approach to "the invention new heroes and martyrs."<sup>46</sup> For example, the scenography of Lviv's Historical Museum was altered in 2006 to tone down suggestions of collaboration. The Nazi 'Nachtigall' battalion became the 'Division of Ukrainian Nationalists'; the SS 'Galizien' Division became the 'Ukrainian Division Halychyna'.<sup>47</sup> Ukraine should have foregone a non-discrimination policy in its attempts to restore its national heritage and history. Doing so would have avoided providing Putin with one of the most aggressive themes of his propaganda. Condemning the Putin regime's falsification of history does not exonerate Ukraine from providing clarity about its own history.

Putin's denazification argument is fuelled by the policy of Ukrainian governments to de-Sovietise the country's heritage. When Petro Poroshenko enacted laws 'prohibiting Soviet sym-

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45. A small far-right party founded in 2014.

46. Delphine Bechtel, "The 1941 pogroms as represented in Western Ukrainian historiography and memorial culture", in *The Holocaust in Ukraine. New Sources and Perspectives*, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), 2013, p. 7. <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20130500-holocaust-in-ukraine.pdf>.

47. Halychyna is Ukrainian for Galicia.

bols and condemning the Soviet regime' in 2015 (resulting in the toppling of several statues of Lenin), Moscow made its hostility clear – as if the memory of the Soviets' heroic struggle against Nazi Germany should mean that Ukrainians could not pass a critical eye over the Sovietisation policy they had had to endure. That is why, for example, Putin rejects the idea that Holodomor was a 'genocide'.<sup>48</sup> However, the fundamental question is whether Russians believe that Ukraine, as an independent country, should have the freedom to manage the public symbols of its own heritage and the right to propose its own historical narrative.

## **Conclusion**

Russia's centuries-long policy of culturally colonising Ukraine clearly casts a long shadow over this report with its focus on heritage. According to Putin, Ukraine's claim that its culture and heritage are autonomous is equivalent to negating its own past: 'Ukraine's ruling circles decided to justify their country's independence through the denial of its past, however, except for border issues. They began to mythologize and rewrite history, edit out everything that united us, and refer to the period when Ukraine

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48. In 2006, President Viktor Yushchenko enacted a law to remember the victims of the famine and punish anyone who contested its genocidal nature. The National Museum of the Holodomor-Genocide was opened in Kyiv in 2008 on the right bank of the Dnieper River.

was part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as an occupation.'

The Russia-Ukraine war is also a symbolic war launched on the basis of a political exploitation of history, the other principal victim of this tragedy. It is therefore Ukraine that is supposedly betraying the shared history of two peoples – as if there were no history for Ukrainians outside the great Russian narrative; as if Ukraine had never existed without Russia. Russians are using history and heritage as a weapon to make Ukraine culpable and to negate its history. Such is the anachronistic reflection of its longstanding cultural and political colonisation. The observation that Ukraine's history may contain some aberrations does not give Russia the right to consider the creation of Ukraine's own popular imagination and its own national story illegitimate.

Vladimir Putin opposes a national rereading of Ukrainian history because it calls into question the narrative in which he very possibly believes, where Soviet Russia is Ukraine's benefactor. Moreover, Ukraine's policy of asserting its identity (despite the many ambiguities therein) has put it on a collision course with the meta-historical myth of 'Great Russia'<sup>49</sup> which Putin is somehow attempting to bring back to life with limited means. The historian Timothy Garton Ash recalls visiting St Petersburg at the beginning of 1994 and meeting Vladimir Putin who only held a municipal role at that point. Putin explained to him that the Russian Federation had to reassert its presence in 'lands which, historically, had

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49. Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Nationalism. Imaginaries, Doctrines, and Political Battlefields*, Routledge, 2018.

always belonged to Russia', such as Crimea, and reestablish its authority over Russians living beyond its borders. It was his view that the world would have to learn to view 'the Russian people as a great nation' once more.<sup>50</sup>

Ukraine's ambition to join the European Union will also have to be assessed on the basis of its ability to accept a critical analysis of its own history. It will need to understand that 'humanism is linked to the development of critical (even self-critical) rationality'<sup>51</sup> because, as Denis de Rougemont put it, European culture is naturally "pluralist, secular, critical and personalist, and encourages invention, innovation and originality, even when it is subversive."<sup>52</sup>

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50. "Putin's post-imperial yearnings were already clear when I met him in 1994, well before the first eastward enlargement of NATO in 1999." Timothy Garton Ash, *Homelands: A Personal History of Europe*, New York, Vintage, 2023.

51. Edgar Morin, *Culture et barbarie européennes*, Paris, éditions de l'Aube, 2012, p. 37.

52. Denis de Rougemont, « Originalité de la culture européenne comparée aux autres cultures », conference of 17 November 1959. Source: CEC archives, Geneva. CEC 119. Box II-I-45.

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# THE CASE OF UKRAINE





# The Shared Patrimony of Romania and Ukraine in the Shadow of Russia

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*Adrian Corpădean*

## Premises

There is little doubt as to the breadth of the change occurring in the relations between Romania and its neighbour, Ukraine, following the onset of the Russian war of aggression on 24th February 2022.<sup>1</sup> This can be regarded as rekindled interest in cooperation and has led to a considerable exchange, fostering mutual knowledge at various levels, including the one of the civil society, which begs the

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1. See, for additional details: Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, Delia Pop-Flanja, "Romania's rapidly changing perceptions of Ukraine: a civil society-driven endeavour with EU nuances?", *Civil Szemle*, special issue IV, 2023, pp. 109-125.

question as to why such relations had not been properly cultivated prior to the aforementioned moment. Our research will attempt to shed light on the solid potential for cooperation between the two countries, given the richness of the patrimonial assets they have in common, whose proper understanding lies at the basis of the new course in bilateral relations and, arguably, down the path to EU (and possible NATO) integration that is being pursued by Kiev. We will dwell upon the controversial episodes and files that the two nations share, through the lens of the geopolitical interests of the Russian Federation, while arguing that the strategy of driving a wedge between Romania and Ukraine is one of the key factors in explaining the rather precarious political and diplomatic dialogue between them in the past.

Our study is centred on elements that are germane to the common patrimony of two nations, with an extended use of the term, so that it may cover historical, cultural-linguistic and identity matters, as well as the shared geographical and demographic interests. It is based not only on an ever more thorough literature exploring the genuine traits of Ukraine amid the regional context, but also on statements made at the political level, documents issued under the auspices of diplomatic endeavours and direct experience with stakeholders in Romanian-Ukrainian ties, from the realms of politics, border communities and civil society. The study is chiefly reliant on qualitative interpretations, albeit some quantitative data is presented on occasion, to serve the arguments pertaining to the breadth of the bilateral relations submitted to our analysis.

There are several hypothesis on which this research is based, the former of which is that Romania, for all its faults during the shaky transition to democracy occurring in the decade following the Revolution of 1989, has maintained a steady commitment to the two national priorities so dramatically laid out in the Snagov Declaration of 1995.<sup>2</sup> In keeping with the more immediate security needs of the country, NATO integration would become the first major national objective and would meet with such emblematic moments as the 11<sup>th</sup> July visit in Bucharest by US President Bill Clinton, who was welcomed with chants evoking the military alliance. Whilst for attaining this essential objective, Romania had to incur major alterations of its regional outlook, amid the 1999 Yugoslav campaign<sup>3</sup>, the latter objective, EU integration, was the one requiring the most assiduous work at various strata of the establishment. It is clear that Romania and Bulgaria were permitted to join the Union with caveats, not the least of which were the Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification, and the safeguard clause for access to the common market. That said, unlike some of its neighbours, which are now advancing on the EU integration path but have oscillated in the past, Romania has held on to its commitments in this regard, which has proved to be paramount for its stability.

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2. Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, "Un rappel de la déclaration de Snagov une décennie après l'intégration de la Roumanie dans l'Union européenne", *Synergies Roumanie*, no. 12, 2017, pp. 25-36.

3. Nikolaos Tzifakis, "The Yugoslav Wars' Implications on Romanian Security", *Southeast European Politics*, vol. 2, no. 1, May 2001, pp. 46-58, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=701901>, last access 11 September 2024.

Another hypothesis that needs to be considered is the constant mistrust Romania has exhibited in the Russian space, beginning with the exogeneous communist system brought by this means on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1945, despite the very low public support for this movement, and continuing even within the communist bloc, owing to the departure of Russian troops in 1958 and then to Ceaușescu's nationalist approach.<sup>4</sup> With a different cultural and linguistic fabric, Romania pursued a course of distrust towards Moscow after the fall of the Soviet Union too, with such episodes as the stationing of Russian troops in Transnistria at the forefront of the animosity.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, following the illegal occupation of Crimea in 2014 and, even more so, the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Romania's enforcement of EU sanctions against Moscow has been exemplary, not unlike the support pledged to the sovereignty of Ukraine, thus marking a clearer, more EU-compatible stance compared to Hungary or Slovakia.

A third hypothesis pertains to the fact that, in terms of foreign policy and regional outreach, Romania has constantly kept an eye on what was going on beyond the Prut River, since the closeness

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4. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, University of California Press, 2003, pp. 25-35. See also Laura M. Herța, *Normalizarea relațiilor româno-iugoslave (1955-1960). Înțelegeri intersubiective asupra limitelor acceptării variantei iugoslave*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022, pp. 111-112.

5. Andrei Guțu, "Transnistria and the War in Ukraine – 31 Years of Active Separatism", *L'Europe Unie*, no. 19, 2023, pp. 129-134. For Romania's approach to the region after 2014, see: Radu Albu Comănescu, "Looking for a Partner. A Romanian Outlook on the EU's Achilles' Heel", *Visegrad Insight*, 16 June 2020, <https://visegradinsight.eu/romania-looking-for-a-partner/>, last access 11 September 2024.

to the Republic of Moldova remains a constant in terms of national interest. This has likely shaped a positive view on the EU's enlargement policy over the years, not only because Romania is a stark beneficiary thereof, but also due to the fact that closer relations to the Republic of Moldova are most likely to be achieved under the umbrella of the single market and borderless area that the EU promotes. For this reason, it became noticeable during the Romanian presidency of the EU Council, in the first half of 2019, that the topic of enlargement needed to be kept on the agenda, albeit on the back burner, all the more so because Romanians are generally quite enthusiastic about all topics surrounding EU affairs, and to Moldova in particular.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this framework that sets Romania apart from some of its neighbours, we will continue to argue that the newly-found support for Ukraine that Bucharest is providing in all major international organisations is genuine, in keeping with the overall positive outlook it has towards the future of a united Europe, and not merely one more manifestation of the rather customary opposition the country shows to Russia's role in the region. If this is validated, then it stands as proof that, following EU membership, Romania has reached a level of maturity that, combined with the economic and military means that are growing, may entitle it to regard itself as a sort of middle-power state in the EU, or at least in the region.

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6. Lucienne Attard, "Priority dossiers under the Romanian EU Council Presidency", Briefing, Outlook for upcoming Presidency, European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 630.313 – December 2018, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630313/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)630313\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630313/EPRS_BRI(2018)630313_EN.pdf), last access 11 September 2024.

## **Patrimonial assets: collaboration and conflict**

A major point that can constitute a patrimonial element inherently shared by Romania and Ukraine is the border, a 600-kilometer long former Soviet Union demarcation line that reflects a particular type of natural and cultural richness, as it divides the region of Bucovina and spreads all the way to the south-east to encompass the natural splendour of the Danube Delta and Black Sea coastal areas. The type of border shared by the two countries ranged from a conflict zone, with such culminating moments as the Second World War, to a refuge causeway opened by Romania amid the current Russian war. The potential of this frontier to become governed, in the perhaps distant future, by the rules of the EU single market holds immense pragmatic importance and should become a cornerstone of the dialogue between Bucharest and Kiev.

History is, without a doubt, a complicated patrimonial asset, be it in the Eastern part of the continent, or in the Balkans, with old wounds that have not been allowed to heal, either by past or present nationalists or by the new wave of populism that is sweeping through the area. Such is the case of the Romanian-Ukrainian shared history, which, in our view, has had a bizarre way of being transposed into teaching materials with omissions, not only under the auspices of the USSR, but also amid the two countries' democratic transitions. The common significance of the 1877-1878 War of Independence is largely dismissed, and the Odessa massacre

of October 1941<sup>7</sup> has been taught with hesitation in Romania, all of which is preventing the acknowledgement of the potential of writing a joint history book between the two neighbours. To add to this, the richness of Bucovina, its people, its folklore and traditions have been taught in both countries much less from this constructive standpoint and much more from that of division, occupation, conquest and loss. It is not our intent to make judgments about the sinuous course of interwar history, but simply to point out that, at least in Romanian-Ukrainian relations, the perpetuation of tough historical legacy has been a constant and has led to mutual distrust or ignorance, with the notable exception of border communities. We will, thus, argue that the potential for overcoming the complicated historical traumas is likely to be fuelled by the latter, since there is a tradition of cooperation, cultural and linguistic exchange, as well as a pragmatic understanding of the good that can accrue from common projects.

The hurdles erected by history can be swept aside by diplomacy, but this has once again proved to be surrounded by complications in the Romanian-Ukrainian case, since the post-war agreements with the then-Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine were obviously signed under Russian tutelage. Later, albeit Romania did recognise the independence of Ukraine after the fall of the USSR, territorial claims put a strain on the attempt to reach agreement on a bilateral treaty, which eventually led to Romania coming under

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7. Mihai Chioveanu, "The Dynamics of Mass Murder. Grasping the Twisted Decision-Making Process behind the Romanian Holocaust", *Sfera Politicii*, no. 2 (168), 2012, p. 27, [https://revistasferapoliticii.ro/sfera/pdf/Sfera\\_168.pdf#page=27](https://revistasferapoliticii.ro/sfera/pdf/Sfera_168.pdf#page=27), last access 11 September 2024.



pressure to resolve territorial disputes amid its NATO bid. The negotiations were protracted and some of the disputes remained unresolved by the document, as they had stayed throughout the Soviet period, i.e. for nearly half a century. Although this type of conflict pales in comparison with the ones affecting Georgia or Moldova<sup>8</sup>, or, to put it cynically, until recently, Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is evident that neither the USSR nor the Russian Federation have shown any willingness to mediate its resolution.

This attitude provided fertile ground for the public opinion in both Romania and Ukraine to remain antagonised over a variety of files, most of which were inherited from the pre-1989 era.<sup>9</sup> One of this is the Kryvyi Rih industrial complex, whose foundations were laid in 1983 and which failed to yield any profits for Romania, given the abandonment of the project in 1990. Since Bucharest held a participation of 27% in the project, this turned into an economic and financial bone of contention between the two neighbouring states which is still largely unresolved, therefore fuelling disgrun-

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8. On the conflicts in Georgia, see Laura M. Herța; Alexandra Sabou, "Frozen Conflicts in South Caucasus and their Impact on the Eastern Partnership. The case of Georgia and its Break-away Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia", in Valentin Naumescu; Dan Dungaciu (eds.), *The European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood Today: Politics, Dynamics, Perspectives*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 116-156 and Laura M. Herța, "Complexities and Challenges within the Eastern Partnership: Ethno-Political Secessionism, Frozen Conflicts, and De Facto States in South Caucasus", *Studia UBB Europaea*, (LXII) no. 1, March 2017, pp. 105-127.

9. Julien Danero Iglesias, "Ukraine, Romania, and Romanians in Ukraine", *Südosteuropa*, no. 3 (62), 2014, pp. 373-384, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/soeu-2014-620307/html>, last access 11 September 2024.

tled rhetoric on the Romanian side.<sup>10</sup> A Soviet-driven endeavour at its origin, the complex turned into a symbol of impotence and diplomatic clumsiness, leading to three decades of failure to resolve a dossier that required maturity, a decent dose of foresight and political will.

Not very different in terms of approach lies the Snake Island saga. A tiny plot of land that was largely unknown to the world prior to it witnessing the bravery of Ukrainian defenders on the very first day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (24<sup>th</sup> February 2022), Snake Island is the perfect example of Soviet/Russian-induced conflict legacy. Since the 1948 agreement signed by the Ukrainian SSR and Romania on relinquishing sovereignty over the island to the former was contrary to the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, the status quo of the small territory remained in limbo throughout the Cold War period. Even the 1997 Romanian-Ukrainian treaty failed to clarify the matter of control over the continental shelf surrounding the island, despite it being formally relinquished by Bucharest. This shortcoming of bilateral ties fomented ample public opinion campaigns surrounding the subject, to be further ignited by the trial brought by Romania before the International Court of Justice in 2005, resulting in a favourable decision four years later and in significant gains in terms of the energy potential of the continental shelf claimed by Bucharest.<sup>11</sup> The press on

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10. Andrei Chirileasa, "Romania attempts to sell stake in Krivoi Rog metallurgical plant in Ukraine", *Romania Insider*, 12 July 2021, <https://www.romania-insider.com/romania-attempt-sell-stake-krivoi-rog>, last access 11 September 2024.

11. Lavinia Elena Tănase (Măxineanu); Roxana Manea (Alexandru), *Snake Island - Black Sea Strategic Area*, Carol I National Defence University Publish-

both sides, as expected, did little to cover the trial from a technical standpoint – which was indeed the dominant nature thereof – and mostly sparked further animosity, often hinting at past territorial disputes of a far greater breadth than the tiny island.

The building of the Bystroye Canal by the Ukrainian government as of 2003 did little to appease such feelings, as it is connected to one of the most sensitive environmental subjects for Romania, namely the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Danube Delta. Largely condemned by Bucharest, the European Commission and the US, the project was seen as severely damaging to the aforementioned habitat and drove a wedge between the two countries that manage the Delta. The history of it is once again complicated, largely unknown and not divulged by the media on either side. In a nutshell, it includes episodes such as the digging of the infamous Danube-Black Sea Canal, with enormous costs in terms of human lives, all of which manifested themselves under the eye of the USSR. The inability to reach an agreement on the matter after the fall of communism and various feats of stubbornness on the part of both governments involved made the Bystroye yet another favourite contentious topic for the public opinion, despite recent positive developments stemming from the application of the Espoo Convention.<sup>12</sup>

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ing House, 2022, pp. 284-291.

12. Simona Cârlușea, "Disputa pe canalul Bâstroe, încheiată. România și Ucraina au ajuns la o înțelegere", *Europa Liberă România*, 17 December 2023, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/canalul-bastroe-disputa-incheiata/32734364.html>, last access 11 September 2024.

Judging in a rush by the abovementioned subjects, one could claim that Romanian-Ukrainian relations are predominantly based on division and that the shared patrimony, be it historical or geographic, provides little on the path to reconciliation. In fact, this is largely contradicted by a major patrimonial asset, the one of ethnic minorities. In the following paragraphs, we will attempt to argue that despite the differences in approaches to the rights of such populations, Romania and Ukraine may place them at the forefront of any argument advocating more closeness in bilateral ties, especially at present, when shared aspirations are more evident than ever before.

## **The potential of communities**

The sparks of conflict in the relations between Romania and Ukraine, as outlined above, were predominantly of a political nature, thus their reflection was materialised in military doctrine, hasty diplomatic statements and nationalist outbursts. This angle has now been tackled by the constructive approach taken by Bucharest throughout the war of aggression that was ignited by Russia in February 2022, with such concrete actions as condemnation of the military campaign before UN bodies, the refusal to recognise the sham referenda in the occupied provinces, the

interventions in favour of Ukraine before the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, the support granted for the recognition of the EU candidate status, and so on.<sup>13</sup> Other pragmatic actions have included the transportation facilities provided to Ukrainian agricultural produce through Romanian ports and, of course, the openness that has defined the welcoming of refugees on Romanian soil and the provision of public services to them, with considerable support on the part of civil society organisations.<sup>14</sup> From a more symbolic viewpoint, the official visits at government and even at presidential level would have been difficult to fathom prior to the onset of the war and yet have become crucial in changing the perspectives of the people with regard to the neighbouring country. President Zelensky's virtual address before the Romanian Parliament in April 2022, followed by President Iohannis' trip to Kyiv in June 2024, undoubtedly played a role in the effort of bringing the two countries closer together under the auspices of the common aspirations – and enemy – they now share.

If such events as the ones portrayed above may have appeased, if not erased, past mistrust and fostered mutual knowledge, there

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13. More information on the legal dimension of such interventions can be found here: Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean; Mihaela Opreșcu, "Romania's views of the European present and future of Ukraine amid the war of aggression of the Russian Federation", in *Proceedings of the XIII International Scientific Conference "Freedom, safety and independence: legal dimension"*, National Aviation University of Ukraine, Kyiv, 2023, pp. 134-137.

14. Elena Grad-Rusu, Marius Grad, "Helping those in need: civil mobilization in Romania in the context of the war in Ukraine", *Civil Szemle*, no. 2, 2023, pp. 169-185.

is a driving force behind this endeavour that has not lain dormant, but has been largely underestimated – that of the ethnic communities the two countries share. Unfortunately, in the region, this asset is often used for puny political goals and misinterpreted or downright ignored before the public opinion, since it is often much easier to sell historical traumas than the potential for constructive cross-border collaboration. We will argue that the minority groups represented by Romanians in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Romania fell once more victim to the poorly managed ties between the two countries, with Russia serving as a disruptive factor.

According to the census of 2021<sup>15</sup>, there are 45.8 thousand Ukrainians living in Romania, most of whom reside in the counties of Maramureş (25.7 thousand), Suceava (7.9 thousand) and Timiş (4.1 thousand). This accounts for 0.24% of Romania's population, marking a slight decrease compared to the previous census, from 2011, which had indicated a total number of 51.7 thousand Ukrainians.<sup>16</sup> In keeping with the community acquis and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which was ratified by Romania in 2008, the Ukrainian minority benefits from certain

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15. "Comunicat de presă, Recensământul Populației și Locuințelor, runda 2021, date provizorii în profil teritorial", National Institute of Statistics of Romania, 31 January 2021, [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com\\_presa/com\\_pdf/rpl2021\\_date\\_provizorii\\_profil\\_teritorial\\_ian\\_2023.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/rpl2021_date_provizorii_profil_teritorial_ian_2023.pdf), last access 11 September 2024.

16. "Comunicat de presă privind rezultatele provizorii ale Recensământului Populației și Locuințelor – 2011", National Institute of Statistics of Romania, 2 February 2012, <https://insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/alte/2012/Comunicat%20DATE%20PROVIZORII%20RPL%202011.pdf>, last access 11 September 2024.

rights, which encompass representation by means of one deputy in the Romanian lower house of Parliament, teaching in Ukrainian in 60 schools, including the Taras Șevcenko high school in Sighetu Marmăției, bilingual signs in localities where the minority population exceeds 20% and others.<sup>17</sup>

Since Ukraine is not in a position to hold a census at this time, we may resort to the 2001 data in order to underline the weight of the Romanian community there. This reveals that 409.600 people declared themselves to be either Romanians (151.000) or Moldovans (258.600), which remains a bone of contention in the dialogue between Bucharest and Kyiv. Since both Romania and the Republic of Moldova acknowledge that Romanian is the common official language of the two nations, the aforementioned separation is contested by Romania at least from this standpoint amid the repercussions this has on the right to a complete education in one's mother tongue. Bilingualism in the ethnic communities this section of our research leans on may be regarded as one of the key patrimonial assets that constitute the richness of cooperation at this level, and yet politically, it remains arguably the most prominent hurdle, even in the context of war. Whilst the topic is not thrust to the forefront in an aggressive manner, as it has been the case with Viktor Orbán over the Hungarians living in Zakarpattia, the Romanian Government is still pushing for the clarification of a series of aspects germane to the rights and identity of this size-

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17. More on this can be found in: Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, "Le patrimoine des langues minoritaires en Roumanie et en Ukraine : héritage commun, approches différentes", *Synergies Roumanie*, no. 18, 2023, pp. 11-21.

able community. The official position of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is impregnated with bitterness even at present, as it results from the official website of the Romanian Consulate in Cernăuți/Chernivtsi: “The Romanian community would represent the third largest ethnic group in Ukraine, after Ukrainians and Russians, if it were not artificially divided into Romanians (151,000 people) and “Moldovans” (258,600 people)” – translated from Romanian. Needless to say, the adverb “artificially” and the use of inverted commas around the term “Moldovans” are indicative of the scale of the annoyance.<sup>18</sup>

This brings us to a further escalation of the matter, whose echoes reverberated even after the beginning of Russia’s war – the use of the so-called “Moldovan language” in Ukrainian legislation and education system. While the removal of this formula was not presented as a condition per se for Romania to support embattled Ukraine, it had been a thorny subject between the two neighbours and the post-February 2022 situation has shed new light on the potential to resolve it, all the more so since the Republic of Moldova shares Romania’s view on the matter.<sup>19</sup> The negotiations with Kyiv have been placed within the broader context of *acquis alignment*, since chapter 23 of EU negotiations remains

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18. “Comunitatea românească din Ucraina”, Consulate General of Romania in Chernivtsi, <https://cernauti.mae.ro/node/286>, last access 11 September 2024.

19. “Românii din Ucraina cer Kievului să renunțe la sintagma ‘limba moldovenească’”, *Radio Europa Liberă Moldova*, 18 May 2023, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/romanii-din-ucraina-cer-kievului-sa-renunte-la-sintagma-limba-moldoveneasca-/32417157.html>, last access 11 September 2024.



a landmark in terms of fundamental rights, and the opinions of the Venice Commission<sup>20</sup> on the laws pertaining to the use of minority languages in Ukraine over the last few years have been critical. After the Ukrainian Government's decision to replace the concept of "Moldovan language" with "Romanian language", of November 2023, followed by the adoption of amendments by the Supreme Rada to the Law on National Minorities, as of December 2023, criticism of the topic has been toned down on the Romanian side, albeit some worries remain regarding dual citizenship. It is clear that Romanian and Ukrainian interpretations of the rights granted to national minorities still differ, and are implemented in totally different contexts (EU membership, on one side, war on the other), but the patrimonial richness of minority languages is a major point that needs to be positively exploited by the two governments on the way to achieving more closeness.<sup>21</sup>

Having established that the potential for cooperation in the light of the situation regarding ethnic minorities is immense, we cannot help but stress that multilingual education is key to building bilateral ties, as well as very much European in spirit. Mobility agreements at the level of schools that provide teaching in the language of the minority community are exceptionally rewarding

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20. See: "Analytical note prepared in the framework of the project 'Support for implementing European standards relating to anti-discrimination and rights of national minorities in Ukraine', Venice Commission, CDL-REF(2024)001, Opinion No. 1152-2023, Strasbourg, 22 January 2024, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdf-file=CDL-REF\(2024\)001-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdf-file=CDL-REF(2024)001-e), last access 11 September 2024.

21. Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, "Le patrimoine des langues minoritaires en Roumanie et en Ukraine : héritage commun, approches différentes", art. cit.

in terms of acceptance and respect. Ukraine's Cernăuți / Chernivtsi and Odessa regions, both with important Romanian-speaking communities, include schools with teaching in Romanian (61 in the former), so the potential for partnerships is well rooted.<sup>22</sup>

A final point on the role of communities in promoting a pragmatic stance on Romanian-Ukrainian ties hovers around the joint implementation of projects. From cultural festivals and associations to cross-border initiatives, they are likely to endow the shared patrimony with a level-headed, lucrative means of managing its components, which is, once again, a strategy that can only be regarded as compatible with the EU's views on regional cooperation. To this end, we have wondered whether there is enough funding made available under the auspices of EU programmes for Romania and Ukraine to apply for jointly, whilst looking at potential best practice at the level of NGOs or administrative authorities.

Small cultural projects are rife between the two ethnic groups, as it is easily revealed by sifting through the archives of such associations as the Union of Ukrainians in Romania or the National Council of Romanians in Ukraine.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, a more pecuniary-driven excursion will take us to the EU's funding programmes under Interreg, and the still insufficiently known opportunity posed by the Euroregions.

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22. "Comunitatea românească din Cernăuți", Consulate General of Romania in Chernivtsi, <https://cernauti.mae.ro/node/480>, last access 11 September 2024.

23. The data is available here: <https://uur.ro/?lang=en>, [https://www.facebook.com/p/Consiliul-Na%C8%9Bional-al-Rom%C3%A2nilor-din-Ucraina-100066477219434/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/p/Consiliul-Na%C8%9Bional-al-Rom%C3%A2nilor-din-Ucraina-100066477219434/?_rdr), last access 11 September 2024.

In the latter case, the Upper Prut Euroregion has been active since 2000 and constitutes a worthy, albeit far from perfect, example of a cross-border association bringing together several counties (denominations vary) from Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. The entity is an interface for common projects, some tackling the protection of national minorities, while others aim to enhance the infrastructure and economic setting shared by the three bordering countries. While the Euroregion is not an EU construct, the fact that Romania became a member state following the signing of its constitutive document, and that later on, both Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova ratified their respective EU Stabilisation and Association Agreements, rendered the structure more dynamic. Endowed with its own management bodies and rotational leadership, the Upper Prut Euroregion has yielded several projects on topics like public administration, environment, transport, culture and NGO cooperation.<sup>24</sup> The Lower Danube Euroregion is another association of this sort, created in 1998 by the same bordering countries.<sup>25</sup>

As regards EU funding, the 2014-2020 framework set aside the modest amount of 60 million euros for the Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Programme, funded through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). With five Romanian counties and four Ukrainian oblasts involved, all located along the common border, the programme sponsored 59 projects, the largest of which

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24. Serhii Hakman, *Euroregiunea „Prutul de Sus”: experiență, particularități, provocări, căi de intensificare a colaborării*, Bukrek, 2020.

25. Euroregiunea Dunărea de Jos, <https://actedj.ro/>, last access 11 September 2024.

having covered cross-border security and management, pollution, healthcare and transport infrastructure. No project has been implemented by or in partnership with the Upper Prut Euroregion, albeit the Lower Danube Euroregion does appear as a beneficiary of two distinct projects.<sup>26</sup>

The current multiannual financial package of the EU (2021-2027) makes use of the Interreg NEXT facility to earmark an even more modest sum, of 48 million euros, for Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border initiatives. The estimated calendar for the calls<sup>27</sup> leans on the experience of the previous programme and is decisively focused on environmental priorities, social development and administration. The shared patrimony of the two neighbours is in the limelight, *in extenso*, because the projects to be supported will likely tackle the human and the environmental assets that constitute the backbone thereof. While this is somewhat in keeping with the ailments we have also previously identified amid the cooperation efforts between the two countries, the financial weight carried by the programme would fall short of the genuine needs of the border communities even in the absence of the devastation and humanitarian crisis brought about by Russia's war of aggression. On the other hand, such multiannual strategies endow cross-border cooperation with much-needed institutional settings,

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26. Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine, "Awarded projects", <https://ro-ua.net/en/about-the-programme/awarded-projects>, last access 11 September 2024.

27. Programul Interreg NEXT Romania-Ucraina, "Calendar estimativ\* al lansărilor apelurilor de proiecte", June 2024, [https://ro-ua.net/images/Calendar\\_lansare\\_apeluri\\_ROUA\\_Jun2024\\_ro.pdf](https://ro-ua.net/images/Calendar_lansare_apeluri_ROUA_Jun2024_ro.pdf), last access 11 September 2024.

foster the development of a project management culture, promote mutual trust and inject a dose of pragmatism that is bound to help overcome historical hurdles.

## Conclusion

This research reveals merely a portion of the previously underexplored potential for cooperation between two of the largest countries in the region, in whose case a major outside factor has proved to be a constant nuisance on the way to mutual knowledge. With regard to Romania, the first hypothesis enunciated at the beginning of this paper, pertaining to how the country has maintained a steady pro-EU and, more generally, pro-western commitment post-1989, is essential to understanding its priorities in terms of foreign policy. The second hypothesis is also confirmed in the light of the hurdles raised by Moscow since Soviet times along the path of Romanian-Ukrainian cooperation, which contribute to the general mistrust Romania has exhibited towards Russia. As for the third hypothesis, indeed, Romania's pro-EU stance is a delineator of its mostly constructive attitude towards the enlargement policy, but Ukraine is a recent focus for the country in this regard, since the regional interests shared by Romania and the Republic of Moldova supersede any other enlargement-related dossier. That said, the tragic events that began to unfold in February 2022 enabled Romania's administration and civil society to gain a better

understanding of the fruits to be picked by working together more closely with the country's largest neighbour. The human element pushed into the limelight by the war has engendered a wave of support that may yet prove to be the single decisive factor in terms of turning the page on past rivalry.

We have deemed it necessary to remember some of the thorny files shared by the two countries until recently, in order to underline the role of Russia in the prevention of genuine communication for conflict management. None of the issues noted is likely to be depicted as insurmountable, but, much like the entire EU integration process Ukraine is hopefully going to be able to decisively engage on, the resolution thereof will still take some time. What is essential is for the support provided at state level to Ukraine not to wane, and for nationalists not to derail the process by exacerbating or resurrecting the old dormant narratives.

Any endeavour meant to showcase the richness of the shared patrimony between Romania and Ukraine should acknowledge its limitations. Whilst our focus has mostly been on communities, their cultural attributes and joint projects, we have merely scraped the surface of such matters as language, perceptions of otherness, let alone folklore and other specific patrimonial assets from the realm of culture. Our intent has been to set the stage for ampler future discovery, culminating with the perks that the EU integration of Ukraine can bring to the region, while stressing the need for Romania to shoulder its neighbour all the way through what is expected to be a protracted reconstruction process, in parallel with accession negotiations.

If matters pertaining to the use of languages in education, dual citizenship or border management can be overcome through political dialogue, the common patrimony of Romania and Ukraine is in dire need of swift and pragmatic financial support. This exceeds the stingy allocations provided under the cross-border programmes of the EU and is unlikely to be boosted by national allocations on either side, in the current microeconomic context. It is understandable that the ultimate incentive of EU integration (peace set aside) is access to the single market and to structural funds (and reconstruction packages for war-torn Ukraine), but the tight budgets set aside for aspiring member states by Brussels remain unrealistically modest, as well as widely discouraging. This is mirrored by the current state of the Romanian-Ukrainian EU-sponsored programmes, whose narrowness ought to be disputed in the context of the genuine needs on both sides of the border.

This study is not devoid of limitations, the most significant of which is our inability to predict the duration or outcome of the war of aggression that Ukraine has been a victim of since February 2022. Access to Ukrainian decision-makers within the border communities has not been a priority at this time, but is likely to become the focus of a subsequent paper, since this would enable the exploration of a more intimate view on such matters as cooperation projects and patrimonial assets.

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# The Birth of the Cult of Our Lady of Kyiv in Naples. An emergency ritual in wartimes

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*Giovanni Gugg*

## Introduction

In the first pages of the introduction to the collective volume *Santità e tradizione*, the Italian anthropologist Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani wrote that «reality is, for us, and cannot fail to be, the representation we give ourselves of it, the narrative we form of it». I found that phrase a few weeks before the death of the great anthropologist, when, faced with certain information coming from

the places of war in Ukraine, I thought that, in fact, we do nothing but continuously internalize symbols and representations, that is, we are incessantly committed to creating reality which, according to Lombardi Satriani, “are the result of prejudices, readings conditioned by the glasses with which this reality has been viewed.”<sup>1</sup>

Still dazed by the warlike aggression launched by Putin’s Russia against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, around mid-April I came across news different from the usual and shocking daily bulletins of the conflict: a new Marian icon had ‘appeared’ in the surroundings of Naples called *Our Lady of Kyiv* and, out of curiosity, I reconstructed its salient passages, enriching them with some interpretative notes. The phenomenon is new and, above all, composite and evolving, because it concerns different subjects, places and tools: a mother and a little girl from Kyiv, a Hungarian photographer, an artist from Dnipro, global social media and a parish from Neapolitan hinterland, all in the context of a war that is probably still far from dying out.

At the moment, therefore, we are not able to understand if and how the story of the “Ukrainian Madonna” will evolve, if a cult or ritual practices will arise, so – with honesty and prudence – this first intervention of mine is to be considered a sort of collection of food for thought which, who knows, could be useful as avenues of investigation for possible future investigations, which however cannot ignore repeated ethnographic observations. Moreover, atten-

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1. Luigi Maria Lombardi Satriani, “Evocazione degli Inferi e itinerari paradisiaci”, in Id. (ed.), *Santità e tradizione. Itinerari antropologico-religiosi in Campania*, Meltemi, Rome, 2004, p. 8.

tion must be shifted from the product to the process, from the object to the context that is returning to Lombardi Satriani's suggestions regarding the image, which is never the only one that determines a cult, but its localization process and contextualization.

## **A viral photo**

On February 26, 2022, the Hungarian photojournalist András Földes published on his Twitter and Instagram profiles<sup>2</sup> some images taken in the previous 48 hours in the underground of Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, which had been besieged and bombed for two days due to Russia's military invasion. Among the many refugees, Földes portrayed a young mother while breastfeeding her newborn baby: sitting on the ground and leaning against the marble wall not far from some escalators, that woman looks at the photographer's lens, wearing a winter coat and a sweatshirt yellow with hood, which he holds slightly raised with his right hand to allow feeding of a baby wrapped in a sort of *gigoteuse* and with her head covered by a pink hat with pom-poms. At the same time, András Földes publishes a larger photo gallery on Facebook<sup>3</sup>

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2. András Földes' Twitter and Instagram posts, February 26, 2022: [https://www.twitter.com/foldes\\_andras/status/149762140589826048](https://www.twitter.com/foldes_andras/status/149762140589826048) ; <https://www.instagram.com/p/CacGAk-oOBi/>

3. András Földes' post on Facebook, February 26, 2022: <https://www.facebook.com/andrasfoldesjournalist/posts/372765614671664>

where there is a similar image but taken from another angle: the woman is portrayed in the same position, but now her gaze is turned towards her little girl, of whom one can sense the presence from the gesture and the left hand holding the little girl's head. The photographer's captions are merely news, in which he explains the presence of those people in the subway stations, considered safer during the siege of the city, and briefly introduces some of the subjects portrayed: «There were people talking, breastfeeding child, was watching a film, there was a woman who didn't want to leave the parrot at home.»

Meanwhile, his photographs begin to circulate and be shared, and therefore to be interpreted and reinterpreted. All this happens spontaneously, due to the very mechanism of social media; however, it also receives some particularly important impulses: on 8 March, for example, the "Vatican News" press agency relaunches on the various versions in different languages of its Facebook pages the second photo of Földes on the International Day of Human Rights. Woman. In the Italian version, the caption reports a statement by Pope Francis, according to whom «Women are guardians of the world. By looking with the heart, they manage to keep dreams and concreteness together»<sup>4</sup>. The concept is then explained and explored in depth in the linked article<sup>5</sup>, in which

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4. The "Vatican News" post on Facebook, March 8, 2022: <https://www.facebook.com/vaticannews.it/photos/7965483316810762>

5. Benedetta Capelli, 2022: *Francesco: 'Penso alle mamme e ai bimbi in fuga dalle guerre, il mondo ritrovi concordia'*, in "Vatican News", 8 March: <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/papa/news/2022-03/papa-francesco-donne-giornata-internazionale-russia-ucraina.html>

Földes' photo returns, but this time described with an explicit caption: «The Madonna of Kiev», where the lowercase letter protects against comparisons that could appear blasphemous.

Two days later, on March 10, András Földes publishes<sup>6</sup> a new gallery of images on Facebook, but this time they are transformations of his photography, graphicized like a *manga* or a painting or, again, reworked in the manner of a sacred icon. The latter is the work of Maryna Solomennikova, originally published on her Instagram profile on March 5<sup>7</sup>, which after two months has over 11,600 likes and more than 200 comments. Since March 12, the image has also been made available on the “Creative market” website<sup>8</sup>, which deals with the buying and selling of unpublished works of art, where the high-definition file of the “Kyivan Madonna” can be purchased for 50 dollars, a sum which, specifies a note, “will be donated to charitable funds in Ukraine”. In an interview with Sergey Gutakovsky of the Ukrainian online magazine “SFG”<sup>9</sup>, Solomennikova explained that she had seen the photograph while scrolling through the news on her smartphone

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6. András Földes' post on Facebook, March 10, 2022: <https://www.facebook.com/andrasfoldesjournalist/posts/380350817246477>

7. Maryna Solomennikova's post on Instagram, March 5, 2022: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CauqET-t8-2/>

8. The “Creative market” web page where a copy of Maryna Solomennikova's “Kyivan Madonna” is on sale: <https://creativemarket.com/tubik/7056439-Kyivan-Madonna-Illustration-HIGH-RES>

9. Gutakovsky S., 2022: Solomennikova: ‘I draw because I want to show people from all around the world what is going on in Ukraine’ , in “SFG”, March: <https://sfg.media/en/magazine/i-draw-because-i-want-to-show-people-from-all-around-the-world-what-is-going-on-in-ukraine-marina-solomennikova/>



and that, before starting to make the illustration, she had tried to find both the woman and the photographer, but there were no details and no possibility of contact; however, «then the force of the Internet brought us all together, they are very nice and interesting people». The painter also said that her version «is not an icon, it is more of a figure», however it became one following a specific contact: «a Neapolitan wrote to me, he wanted to distribute small leaflets in support of the Ukraine with this illustration during a church ceremony».

## **A timeless image**

On the evening of February 25, at the sound of yet another air raid alert, 27-year-old Tatyana Bliznyak ran into the subway underground in Kyiv with her two-month-old daughter Marichka, her husband Mikhail and their pug Phoebe. Of the uncertainty, the cold, the waiting: we know something thanks to the photos of that evening by András Földes, in which she is portrayed, as well as the other inhabitants of the Ukrainian capital who took refuge in that improvised shelter. Then, however, the little girl must feed herself and the mother then settles down next to a wall and breastfeeds her: here is the moment whose photo, once it reached social media, would quickly spread throughout the world.

The image of breastfeeding is among the most archaic and present in the history of figurative representations of human be-

ings. To stick to the classics, we range from the Vase of the goddess Istar, the Babylonian prototype of the subsequent cult of mother goddesses, to the *Mater Matuta* of Roman mythology, passing through the Egyptian statue of Isis breastfeeding Horus who, in art, is undoubtedly the inspiration of the figure of the Madonna and Child of the Christian world. In this regard, James Frazer observes that

“Ancient Egypt may have contributed to the sumptuous symbolism of the Catholic Church, as it contributed to the pale abstractions of theology. Certainly, in art the figure of Isis with the baby Gold [Horus] at her breast resembles the Madonna and Child so much that it has sometimes received the adoration of unaware Christians. And it is perhaps to Isis, in her later character as protectress of sailors, that the Virgin Mary owes her beautiful epithet of *Stella Maris*.”<sup>10</sup>

In ancient times, breastfeeding had not always been well considered: milk was certainly seen as synonymous with fertility, well-being and abundance, but it was often completely disconnected from the concept of motherhood. As Aurora Russo observes, “in ancient Greece, breastfeeding was condemned because it was believed that this would create a privileged relationship between mother and child, a relationship from which the father would be excluded. In imperial Rome the rich patricians rejected it because it would have ruined their breasts and would have distanced them

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10. James George Frazer, *Il ramo d'oro. Studio sulla magia e la religione* [1922], Boringhieri, Turin, 1973, p. 603.

from society life”<sup>11</sup>, so it was above all Christianity that re-evaluated maternal breastfeeding: in the image of Mary “Queen of Skies” was joined by that of the “Madonna del Latte” (“Our Lady of Milk”), which became widespread starting from the 12th century. Already in the Gospel of Luke this entirely human characteristic of Mary is underlined, for example in verse 11, 27, in which it is written: “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you.”

With this image, the Christian world takes on a less courtly and more popular connotation, therefore more earthly and closer to the faithful, more confidential; in fact, the cult of the Madonna spread especially in the countryside, where the humblest women felt a greater need to breastfeed and raise their children, compared to wealthy ladies who had more possibilities of entrusting their children to wet nurses. Furthermore, in certain areas such as the south of the Italian peninsula, the Marian cult is spreading massively, to the point of being clearly the most prevalent, although Mary is invoked with a great variety of names; Giuseppe Galasso notes that

“Indeed, the multiplicity of denominations expresses a naive (but, at times, or in other ways, also refined) process of appropriation, determination, collective and individual sublimation of the figure of Mary [...]. It is thanks to this process that Mary

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11. Aurora Russo, *La Madonna del Latte. L'allattamento attraverso le immagini dell'arte*, Ministero della Salute, Rome, 2016, p. 3.

becomes her own, unmistakable patroness, guaranteed in this specificity by the cultic reference expressed in the name.”<sup>12</sup>

In Campania, among the various Marian images, particular veneration is reserved for the so-called “Black Madonnas”, which the Neapolitans address with various names, from that of “Mamma Schiavona” to that of “La Bruna”: their color is dark because of Byzantine derivation or of local production, on the Byzantine model, and often at the basis of their cult they have a legend concerning Saint Luke, considered the first painter or sculptor of the Virgin, according to which the Madonna, when Christ was still a child, would have posed for him. The representation of the Virgin would then have been hidden for several centuries to save her from Saracen raids, only to be found and preserved in Constantinople and, subsequently, in various other sanctuaries of the Mediterranean basin. As Gianfranca Ranisio observes, “attributing the images or statues to Luca, who had known Mary, meant attributing to them the characteristic of truthfulness, the icon, which reproduced the face exactly, somehow became a participant in the power of the sacred and, representing a prototype, became itself sacred like relics.”<sup>13</sup>

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12. Giuseppe Galasso, *L'altra Europa. Per un'antropologia storica del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, Mondadori, Milano, 1982, p. 82.

13. Gianfranca Ranisio, “Madonne orientali e culti campani”, in Lombardi Satriani (ed.), *Santità e tradizione. Itinerari antropologico-religiosi in Campania*, Meltemi, Rome, 2004, p. 75.

## Between social media and devotion

On March 14, about a week after the image was released via “Vatican News”, the Jesuit James Martin, director of the Catholic magazine “America Magazine” and among those responsible for “Vatican News”, relaunched Maryna’s work Solomennikova via Twitter<sup>14</sup>, but this time with a more explicit and demanding caption: “Our Lady of Kyiv, pray for us”, with all capital letters.

At the same time, the Ukrainian Jesuit priest Vyacheslav Okun, who is in Rome to further his studies, got in touch with the painter Marina Solomennikova, telling her that it would be important for the Ukrainian refugees in Italy to have something iconic and familiar, presenting her thus his friend Antonio Di Guida, parish priest of the church of San Biagio in Mugnano di Napoli, interested in the image seen on the web, useful in setting up the Holy Sepulcher of Maundy Thursday in his parish.

In an interview with “Fanpage”<sup>15</sup>, Don Antonio reported that, thanks to Okun’s contact, the Ukrainian artist sent him the file and he printed it and exhibited it «for the veneration of the people». Thus, continued Di Guida, «the cult was born, which went beyond our territory of Mugnano and, I believe, has reached

14. James Martin’s tweet, March 14: <https://twitter.com/JamesMartinSJ/status/1503170868146585601>.

15. Cozzolino G., 2022: *A Napoli nasce la Madonna di Kiev: è la mamma ucraina che allatta il figlio nella metro*, in “Fanpage”, 23 April: <https://www.fanpage.it/napoli/a-napoli-nasce-la-madonna-di-kiev-e-la-mamma-ucraina-che-allatta-il-figlio-nella-metro/>

the whole world». The first, temporary, location of the portrait was the *Sepulcher* of Holy Thursday, which is a commemorative display that each Catholic parish develops independently and displays during Holy Week, for a short period of time between the ceremony of the *Washing of the Feet* and the exit processional of the *Via Crucis* on Good Friday. It is a temporary installation in which, among candles, flowers and wheat plants, it is intended to represent a sort of “burning chamber” of the Dead Christ, through which to spread messages of reflection, but also ideas of hope, to the faithful.

In the case of Mugnano di Napoli, the parish priest decided to use the image of Solomennikova, elaborated on the photo by Földes, to prepare a corner of his church in which, during the Holy Thursday rite, the highest Neapolitan Catholic authority participated, or Monsignor Domenico Battaglia, the metropolitan archbishop of Naples, «in communion and in harmony also with the Ukrainian families».

Subsequently, after Easter Sunday, on 17 April, the image was permanently placed in the small church of the Sacred Heart Institute of Mugnano, managed by the Sisters of the Expiatory Victims of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, where, in addition to the students of the neighbourhood, forty children of Ukrainian refugees. As Don Vyacheslav Okun, who celebrates mass for the small community every Sunday, told ANSA, the image of the<sup>16</sup> *Madonna del Metro* is “a modern Mary who, like the mother of

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16. Ansa, 2022: *Ucraina, la Madonna metropolitana di Kiev trova casa a Napoli*, video of 21 April available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/JkNU3MVvKMU>

Jesus, escaped the threat of Herod, shelters herself from violence of the war by caring for and feeding the newborn baby.” For his part, the theologian Luigi Santopaolo, promoter of the reception project in the institute, in an interview with “Cronache della Campania” on 21 April<sup>17</sup> adds a historical analysis that further legitimizes the idea:

“War, charity and care for needy children have always inhabited these walls, since its foundation in the early 1900s commissioned by the nun Maria Pia Brando whose canonization process has just started. Here, during the two world wars, mothers came from all over the region to ask the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the war to end and for their children to return home safe and sound. Decades later, history repeats itself and mothers and wives worried about the fate of their loved ones in Ukraine and their children who have arrived here have found the hospitable arms of these nuns. [...] The “Madonna of the Metro” couldn’t have found a better home, attached to her son like Ukrainian mothers who wait in the school park for their children to finish their lessons.”

When ritual and disaster come into contact, one is confronted with folkloric devices useful for reabsorbing the shock of trauma and at the same time attempting to hold together a community after a convulsion, which I have proposed to call “emergency rituals.” They are devices in the sense that they are tools that relate

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17. Carlino A., 2022: *La Madonna metropolitana di Kiev trova casa a Napoli*, in “Cronache della Campania”, 21 April: <https://www.cronachedellacampania.it/2022/04/madonna-kiev-napoli/>

human beings to one another, like language and any other activity through which the gestures, behaviors, opinions, and discourses of living beings are captured, oriented, determined, intercepted, molded, controlled, and secured. They are at once religious and secular practices, liturgical ceremonies, and displays of sociality intended to contain anxiety: an attempt to master the untamable, but also a way of expressing bewilderment, disbelief, anger, and pain. In other words, “emergency rituals are the way survivors seek solace by holding each other together in order to stay together and overcome despair and disintegration.”<sup>18</sup>

## **The invention of a cult**

In Southern folk tradition, various icons of olive-skinned Madonnas have migrated from East to West following the path along which Christianity spread. Even the *Madonna of Kyiv* has a darker skin than that of her mother photographed in the subway and came to Naples from Eastern Europe, from the Ukraine of Orthodox Christianity and liturgical traditions which have their roots in Anatolia and the Balkans, in Middle East and Egypt.

In the local legends of the Marian cults of Southern Italy, the discovery of a ‘miraculous’ painting is frequent, as in the case of Melito di Porto Salvo, told by Vito Teti: the Turks abandon the

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18. Giovanni Gugg, *Crisi e riti della contemporaneità. Antropologia ed emergenze sanitarie, belliche e climatiche*, Edizioni Museo Pasqualino, Palermo, 2023.



painting of the Madonna on the shore, but “the local inhabitants they do not immediately understand the meaning and value of the painting and refuse the infidels’ offer”, throwing it into the waves. “But the painting, instead of sinking, remains afloat and always shines again in the “Maiorana” area”, so “the people of Melita finally realize that they are faced with a miraculous event, and decide to build a church in honor of the Madonna.”<sup>19</sup> Similar stories are also present in Campania, such as in Positano, where the name of the town itself derives from an invocation of the Madonna – «Posa, posa» (“Put down, put down”) – during a navigation in the 12th century, when the boat carrying a painting, suddenly stopped due to lack of wind and the sailors, who were Benedictine monks, heard a voice coming from the depiction, so they decided to stop on the coast of what is now a renowned international tourist resort.<sup>20</sup>

Naturally we are not in the same situation, however in a certain sense the icon of the *Madonna della Metropolitana* also sailed in the sea of the internet and, after many stages, landed in Mugnano, once again in Campania. Here the painting did not speak, but in some way, it made us understand its value, or rather its purpose; in fact, Don Antonio Di Guida stated that

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19. Vito Teti, “Viaggi religiosi, sentimento dei luoghi, identità. La festa di Maria SS. di Porto Salvo a Melito e a Pentedattilo”, in Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani (ed.), *Madonne, pellegrini e santi. Itinerari antropologico-religiosi nella Calabria di fine millennio*, Meltemi, Rome, 2000, p. 138.

20. Errico Talamo, *Monografia della città di Positano. Dalla sua origine sino al presente*, Stabilimento Tipografico di L. De Bonis, Naples, 1890.

“the intent is precisely to spread this devotion to the worship of the faithful, [because] it can be a comfort, it can be a glimmer of light, it can be an opportunity to console, not only at this moment the Ukrainian families who, in are involved in a particular way and invoke it for the gift of peace, but I believe that this icon, which has arrived in our parish community, is an opportunity for devotion and can be an involvement in prayer for many families also in our territory.”

As in past centuries, even today cults can be ‘invented’, so even the image of *Our Lady of Kiev* – portrayed underground in the city, that is, in a “chthonic cradle”, as Mircea Eliade<sup>21</sup> would say – one day it could become an object of collective devotion and community prayer. Technically, it is not a sacred image: there is no ‘presence’ of the divine, nor was it created with devotional intentions or, to date, can any miracle be attributed to it, however, like the sacred representations of breastfeeding depicted more than the Madonna who feeds Jesus, i.e. the whole Church, so the *Madonna of Kyiv* could go further and guarantee visibility to the Ukrainian drama, restoring dignity to those who, due to a conflict whose real reasons are not understood, are private state.

We do not know whether the story will have a sequel and, if so, whether a possible rapprochement between the Catholic Church of the Vatican and the Kiev Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church,

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21. Mircea Eliade, *Trattato di storia delle religioni*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 2008, p. 225.

now quite distant from the Russian one<sup>22</sup>, could have a role. What we know, however, is that, as shown by Sergio La Salvia (2017) in the case of Saint Philomena, cults are also born due to the role played by the clergy at different hierarchical levels, by religious orders and by political authorities, not infrequently crossing paths that intersect the so-called ‘high’ culture and ‘minor’ religious literature, giving strength to devotional forms capable of resisting time and change. Furthermore, as explained by Gianfranca Ranisio (2004), it is not only the image itself, nor its iconographic characterization that determines the elements and type of development of the cult: “It turns out, in fact, to be equally important to consider the localization process and contextualization within which the sacred image is inserted.”<sup>23</sup>

Reasoning on the relationship between contemporary art and the religious, Ivan Bargna observes that “Christianity therefore continues to offer an iconography, imagery and symbolism that are culturally rooted and easily resonated in the media.” Contemporary works are not simple provocations; however, they should not be loaded with hidden meanings: rather, “they are

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22. There are many examples of fracture between the two Orthodox confessions, Ukrainian and Russian, the most recent of which dates to 25 December 2022, when ANSA published this news: “Christmas among the mermaids in Ukraine: the number of Christians celebrating on December 25th. The percentage of those who no longer want to celebrate it on January 7, the date of the Orthodox and in general of the faithful in Russia, is growing”: [https://www.ansa.it/sito/photogallery/primopiano/2022/12/25/natale-tra-le-sirene-in-ucraina-aumentano-i-cristiani-che-festeggiano-il-25-dicembre\\_ad65c186-f999-47aa-afa2-c047b24edd5d.html](https://www.ansa.it/sito/photogallery/primopiano/2022/12/25/natale-tra-le-sirene-in-ucraina-aumentano-i-cristiani-che-festeggiano-il-25-dicembre_ad65c186-f999-47aa-afa2-c047b24edd5d.html)

23. Ranisio, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

devices activated differently depending on the contexts, actors and spectators involved; they can explicitly evoke the religious without taking on sacred values or assume them in the transfer from a profane place to a consecrated one.”<sup>24</sup>

In other words, as far as this case is concerned, only in the future will we know whether the ‘cult’ of the *Metropolitan Madonna* was not just an episode of the first weeks of the war in Ukraine: it will depend on the process of familiarization and appropriation that the local community, of which the Ukrainian refugees themselves will be part of, through the elaboration of stories, memories and legends, will feel like the ‘history’ of that icon; that is, it will depend on the ability with which that image manages to fit into our territory, on how and to what extent, allegorically, the Madonna will be part and participant of it.

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24. Ivan Bargna, “Forme del sacro e arte contemporanea fra materiale e immateriale”, *Antropologia*, 2019, vol. 6, n. 1, p. 97.



*Image 1*



*Image 2*





*Image 3*

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# The Role of Religion in Contemporary Russian Geopolitics: A Case Study of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

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*Monica Meruțiu, Florina Caloianu*

## Introduction

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict started in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and significantly heightened in 2022 when Russia propelled a full-scale invasion, leading to widespread condemnation and sanctions from the international community. The Russian Federation's rhetoric has centred on claims of "demilitarising" and "denazifying" Ukraine. In any case, initial expectations around



the conflict's swift resolution were overturned by the Ukrainian people's solid resistance, adaptability, and versatility, bolstered by substantial military, humanitarian, and financial support from worldwide allies.

Given the complex nature of this conflict, it is fundamental to look at its numerous dimensions to understand its noteworthiness for the current regional and worldwide order. One frequently overlooked perspective is the religious dimension, which has been eclipsed by the prompt needs for military supplies and humanitarian aid due to the continuous nature of the battling. As noted by Roland Benedikter, religion has been progressively instrumentalized by authoritarian regimes around the world,<sup>1</sup> fueling anti-internationalist sentiments and promoting stories of exceptionalism and opposition to Western or liberal values. These elements are especially pertinent in understanding the ideological underpinnings of the conflict and their impact on broader geopolitical shifts.

This article investigates the religious dimensions of the conflict in Ukraine by looking at three key areas: the relationship between the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church and how this partnership enhances Russia's soft power; the religious dynamics inside Ukraine and their centrality to Ukrainian national identity; and the use of religious rhetoric to legitimise the aggression, including the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church

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1. Roland Benedikter, "The Role of Religion in Russia's Ukraine War. Part 1: A Map of the Situation", *Zeitschrift Für Außen- Und Sicherheitspolitik*, 2022, 16, no. 1, December 15, pp. 79–100, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12399-022-00931-7>.

in supporting the war. Understanding these angles is essential for comprehending how religion influences both the conduct of the conflict and the broader geopolitical accounts surrounding it. The primary sources used for elaboration of this work are articles and books on the use of religion as a soft power tool, the declarations of Russian, Ukrainian and religious figures from both states. The secondary sources used are online articles, reports of NGOs, videos and online publications related to this theme.

### ***Soft Power Dynamics: The Symbiotic Relationship between the Russian Government and the Orthodox Church***

The Russian Orthodox Church is one of the most significant non-governmental actors in the Russian domestic and foreign affairs, pleading for the repairment or strengthening of relations with other states based on a deep-rooted distinct cultural identity, shared history, religious heritage, traditions and customs as well as providing an alternative to a “more authentic” set of values that contrasts the influx of Western ideals.

Central to the Church’s position is the assertion that there exists a common link among Eastern European and some Eurasian countries based on a distinct cultural identity that sets them apart from their Western counterparts, therefore delves into the argument that there is an existing set of values that are better suited to

these peoples and that the Western globalisation is on the hunt of erasing them. It is worth pointing out that the Russian Orthodox Church takes a leadership position in relation to the broader Orthodox community – this manifests in the shape of using religious diplomacy in order to project soft power on behalf of the Russian Federation, the church supports the administration and regards the actions of current Russian actors as being on behalf of Orthodoxy, not only on behalf of the Russian state.

The Russian Orthodox Church seeks to act as a unifying factor within the Orthodox world by fostering alliances and partnerships with other Orthodox-majoritary countries, an example of this approach was the involvement in creating an open dialogue with the Georgian Orthodox Church and fostering closer ties with Serbia, the arguments given by the Church overruled the diplomatic impediments and prior conflicts and tensions due to the non-aggressive stance of religious diplomacy which is expected to bring people together and foster a non-political dialogue.

The driving force of the arguments of the Russian Orthodox Church pertain to the dialogue of civilizations – the idea can be traced to the arguments presented by Samuel P. Huntington in his famous work *The Clash of Civilizations* in which he regards the Orthodox civilization as one of the major cultural entities involved in shaping global politics, the argument for its impact being drawn from the shared distinct cultural identity encompassing shared history, values and traditions. The geopolitical impact of the Orthodox Christianity depends also on the impact of individual actors in shaping regional politics, the examples tackled by the

author being Russia and Serbia. The fault line in his theory concerns the imminent clash of the Orthodox majority regions with neighbouring civilizations, this representing a source of conflict in international relations.

The closeness between the current administration in the Russian Federation and the Church has been attributed to the acute interest shown by Vladimir Putin for the religious security of the state and for the importance of religion acting as an immediate glue for the post-Communist Russian identity:

“Putin’s close relationship to the ROC came to the fore most notably around 2012. However, Putin saw the potential for Orthodoxy to provide a backbone to post-Communist Russian identity, and accordingly to inform relations with the outside world, before he became president. For example, it was Putin who personally oversaw Russia’s Spiritual Security Concept, whilst he was secretary to the National Security Council under President Yeltsin in 1999.”<sup>2</sup>

The symbiotic relation between the church and the state is reflected in the dynamic between the Patriarch Kirill and President Putin, as there is a mythology surrounding their younger years, but most importantly even prior to them climbing up in ranks, they shared a strong belief in restoring their country’s greatness. In the 1990s, the country was going through a period

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2. Eppie Parker, “Russia, Religion and Soft Power - CHACR”, *CHACR - The Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research*, July 14, 2022, <https://chacr.org.uk/2020/06/04/4-june-2020-russia-religion-and-soft-power/>, p. 2.

of self-reflection and religion emerged as “a social glue”<sup>3</sup> offering a poignant direction and identity reaffirmation. During Putin’s first years in the office, the ROC’s importance has been noted and thus empowered to protrude into secular life and in exchange, the Russian leadership received a sanctified image.<sup>4</sup>

The dynamic between the ROC and the Russian government is mutually beneficial with the Church legitimising and authorising the policies implemented by the government and creating a channel of communication that reaches all spectres of the society, while the government reinforces ROC’s status as the dominant religious authority in the Russian Federation. The proximity between the two institutions creates a cohesive sense of identity – religious and political among the Russian population, therefore deriving that the spiritual and political life are not at odds as they are in Western societies, religion is welcomed in public spaces and debates as being an extension of the supposedly typical Russian citizen’s concerns. It is important that the ROC has a distinct web of supporters that often fall outside of political discussions but can be brought closer to the political message of the current establishment. In contrast, the Russian government provides the ROC with various forms of support varying from financial privileges to prioritising their interests prior to other lobbying actors. The most important component in their symbiotic dynamic is the concern with keeping the Russian Federation stable through the enforce-

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3. Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, “Russian Church and Ukrainian War”, *The Expository Times*, 2022, Vol. 134(1) 1–10 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00145246221119120>, p. 2.

4. Eppie Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

ment of traditional values and social norms, thus discouraging dissent or opposition movements.

Therefore, the Russian Orthodox Church has acted as a tool of soft power prior to other institutionalised actors intended for this sole purpose, in the 1990s and early 2000s the neighbouring states that had an Orthodox majority have kept a close eye on the directions coming from Russia to undergo the transition generated by the fall of the USSR. The Ukrainian Orange Revolution signalled Kremlin the impact of Western influence and therefore determined a more focused approach in developing the Russian soft power through exchanges, language program, tourism and culture, the main result of the symbiotic relation between the Russian government's cultural diplomacy and the Russian Orthodox Church adopted the term "Russian World" (*Russkiy Mir*) in official speeches, thus solidifying its presence in the discourse of one of the main actors involved in the Russian public diplomacy.

The term *Russkiy Mir* initially carried a soft power understanding, as the authors Petr Shchedrovitskii and Efim Ostrovskii<sup>5</sup> have coined it for a project intended to use the Russian Diaspora to enter the global market. Ever since the 2000s the term has been adopted not only by members of academia and policymakers, but also by politicians that have used its vagueness to bring to life their projects. Author John O'Loughlin adds:

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5. John O'Loughlin; Gerard Toal; Vladimir Kolosov, "Who identifies with the 'Russian World'? Geopolitical attitudes in southeastern Ukraine, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria", *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2016, vol. 57, no. 6, 745–778, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2017.1295275>, p. 748.

“Russkii mir is polysemous, a catchphrase that is sufficiently fluid, vague, and empty in substance, a sound bite with the useful quality of being ambiguous in substance but clear in its broad boundary – drawing identity-defining function. As used by Putin and other officials, the term “Russkii mir” has three interconnected sets of meaning: linguistic, biopolitical, and civilizational.”<sup>6</sup>

The term also appeared in the 2023 new Russian Foreign Policy Concept and today carries the valences of portraying Russia as an alternative to the decadent West and empowering its messianic drive in this regard. Author Natalia Dubtsova reflects that: “It’s essential to understand the political and ideological processes that emerged in Russia to fill the void left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. These seeds of Russian imperialism and nationalism were sown in the 1990s, and their growth was tightly connected with activity of the Russian Orthodox Church.”<sup>7</sup>

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6. *Ibidem*, p. 749.

7. Natalia Dubtsova, “From pulpit to propaganda machine: tracing the Russian Orthodox Church’s role in Putin’s war”, *Reuters Institute*, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/pulpit-propaganda-machine-tracing-russian-orthodox-churchs-role-putins-war>, February 6, 2024.

## **Religious Dynamics in Ukraine: Shaping National Identity**

Ukraine has a complex landscape with the dream of the autocephaly preceding the current conflict. Back in 1920s there were signs of this desire for autonomy concerning religion, through the establishment of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church:

“The official birth of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church can be dated to 1919, when it was proclaimed by the newly-independent Ukrainian National Republic, or better, to 1920, when the Soviet government that took over Ukraine recognized the Union of Ukrainian Orthodox Parishes as a separate ecclesiastical organization (Bociurkiw 1988,311), or best, to October 14-30,1921, with the First All-Ukrainian Sobor of the UAOC, which created its own hierarchy through election and the laying-on of hands by the clerical and lay members of the sobor upon its first episcopal candidate, Archpriest Vasyl Lypkiwskyi, who became Metropolitan and who then, with other sobor members, consecrated Archpriest Nestor Sharaivskyi as another bishop.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the UAOC was one of the three main Eastern Orthodox churches in Ukraine along with the Ukrainian Orthodox

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8. Ihor G. Kutash, “The Nationalism of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church”, *Arc the Journal of the School of Religious Studies*, 1991, vol. 19, 109–121, <https://doi.org/10.26443/arc.v19i.572>, p. 112.



Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC – KP). The UOC-MP is the largest, followed by the UOC –KP and finally the UAOC. The UAOC emerged as part of the Ukrainian independence movement during the Russian Empire dissolution, and due to the establishment of the USSR, the religious component had been pushed in the background to have it re-emerged prior to the dissolution of the USSR. The UAOC and the UOC – KP shared many similarities with UOC –MP in relation to sermons, activity etc, but they have been excommunicated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, a ban that was lifted in 2018. Finally, the UOC – KP and UAOC joined forces in December 2018, when they formed the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (UOC). The UOC was granted independence (autocephaly) by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople at the beginning of 2019.

Therefore, the Ukrainian people have regarded the autocephaly as an indicator of independence from Russia and took major pride in the separation of their religious identity from Moscow. As expected, among church affiliations the dynamics started to boil with increased levels of polarisation that have slowly eroded the chances of peacebuilding efforts among religious actors,<sup>9</sup> as they focused on delegitimizing initially the UOC-KP and UAOC, and later the UOC, as authors Cora Alder, Palwasha Kakar and Leslie Minney point out:

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9. Cora Alder; Palwasha Kahar; Leslie Minney, "Ukraine: The Religious Dimension of the Conflict", CSS Analyses in Security Policy, *CSS ETH Zurich*, [css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse259-EN.pdf](https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse259-EN.pdf), 2020, p. 2.

“For example, a representative of the UOC-MP denied a father the burial of his one-year old because the child had been baptized in the UOC-KP. For a large number of Ukrainians, belonging to either of the two non-canonical churches, salvation recognized by global Orthodoxy was thus officially only possible through the UOCMP – a church associated with Russia, with which Ukraine is currently at conflict.”<sup>10</sup>

The efforts for autocephaly for a long time have been discouraged by ROC and the new status of the OCU is regarded by Moscow as undermining the attempts of building an Orthodox civilization and encouraging other Orthodox entities to take stance against ROC’s attempt for unity. It is worth mentioning that the Ukrainian political class has been supporting the idea of autocephaly for quite some time – with prior President Poroshenko advocating for it during his presidential campaign and more recently with the Parliament bill that intended to denounce the UOC – MP as an ally to Moscow. Banning the UOC – MP may be a clear signal to Kremlin in relation to the Holy Russia dream, but the OCU has limited recognition internationally as well as within the state and people are still resorting to UOC –MP, alongside of this prospect, banning a religious organisation is much more difficult than an institution or a media outlet.

While there may prevail a sentiment that the teams are very clearly defined and in antagonism, many religious leaders have been and some are still pushing for peace, and are engaged in activism, humanitarian service providing or acting as mediators

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10. *Ibidem*.

in local communities. Indeed, they are also pushing further the agenda of war and discouraging Ukrainians to enlist or support their authorities.

The UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Ilze Brands Kehris has brought up the concern related to the restrictions imposed on religious freedom before the Security Council in 2023:

“Restoring peace and respect for the United Nations Charter and international law is urgent. While the war and occupation persist, we call on all parties to ensure that all people in Ukraine have full freedom to manifest and practice their religion or belief, in line with international human rights law.”<sup>11</sup>

Due to the nature of the war, the Ukrainian leadership has given more attention to territorial concern, battlegrounds and physical matters, while the religious dimension of the conflict remained at a lower level, a reason of criticism among Ukrainian civilians – the silence of their President related to this matter.

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11. “Freedom of Religion Must Prevail in Ukraine, Even as War Drags On, Senior UN Human Rights Official Tells Security Council”, *United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*, 17 November 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15500.doc.htm>.

## **Russian Aggression in Ukraine: Religion as a Geopolitical Instrument**

The Russian aggression in Ukraine has significantly disrupted the post-Cold War international order, challenging the core principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and introducing crucial geopolitical shifts. The conflict has seen a novel blend of conventional and hybrid warfare, including cyber warfare, information operations, and the strategic use of economic resources as weapons. Beyond the immediate military, political, and economic dimensions, the war has also triggered broader geopolitical realignments and shifts in global alliances. Additionally, as previously indicated the invasion has introduced a distinct religious narrative which plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and legitimizing the conflict, further entangling the already intricate framework of the conflict.

The invasion of Ukraine has been framed by some Russian leaders, political and religious figures as a defense of the Orthodox faith, with religious arguments being used to justify the aggression. Since its inception, the idea of “Russian World” (*Russkiy Mir*) has evolved beyond its initial geographical and geopolitical dimensions to embody the notion of a “sacral land,”<sup>12</sup> a narrative heavily promoted by Russian Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill who portrayed Russia as the protector of traditional Christian values in stark contrast to Western liberalism and moral relativism.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Natalia Dubtsova, *op. cit.*

13. *Ibidem.*

Under the Patriarch's influence, *Russkiy Mir* came to represent not just a political and cultural idea but a *spiritual mission*, positioning Russia as a divine bulwark against the perceived moral decay of the West. The concept of *Russkiy Mir* remains central to the religious justification of the invasion, projecting the idea of a shared cultural and spiritual space encompassing Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other Orthodox Slavic nations, underpinned by the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>14</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin and other proponents argue that Ukraine is an integral part of this *world*, and its alignment with the West is perceived as a threat to Orthodox unity. This narrative has been used to justify actions aimed at "protecting" Orthodox Christians in Ukraine from what is conceived as negative Western influence.

A few months after the invasion, on September 5th, 2022, Vladimir Putin signed the decree titled "Concept of Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad." This decree marked a significant milestone in Russia's humanitarian policy, as it outlined a strategic framework for advancing Russian influence globally. Furthermore, what makes this decree particularly unique is that it is "the highest-ranking official document signed by the President of the Russian Federation which refers to the Russian World as a phenomenon,"<sup>15</sup> rather than merely acknowledging the

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14. Riley Bailey; Christina Harward; Angelica Evans; Grace Mappes; George Barros, *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment*, Institute for the Study of War, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-29-2024>, March 29, 2024.

15. *Ukrainian Institute for the Future*, <https://uifuture.org/publications/russia-in-details-events-and-trends-in-russia-over-the-last-week-03-09-09-09/>, September 12, 2022.

“Russian World Foundation”<sup>16</sup>. This shift underscored a broader and more official endorsement of the *Russkiy Mir* concept, framing it as a central element of Russia’s global humanitarian policy and national identity, emphasizing the promotion of Russian language, culture, and Orthodox Christian values as tools for fostering international relations, positioning Russia not just as a geopolitical power but as a guardian of a distinct civilizational identity on the global stage.

The concept legitimizes Russian interference in territories associated with the former Soviet Union, what Heather Ashby describes as a “broader conceptualization of ‘Russianness.’”<sup>17</sup> Ashby emphasizes that this perspective reflects the difficulty many Russians face in accepting that, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many of their ethnic compatriots now reside in foreign countries: “Living in a country that had long been a multinational empire, it was difficult for many Russians to accept that many of their ethnic brethren now lived in foreign countries.”<sup>18</sup> The decree thus extended Russia’s sphere of influence under the guise of protecting and unifying these dispersed Russian communities,

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16. In June 2007, V. Putin signed a decree on creating a *Russian World Foundation* “designed to promote the study and popularity of Russian language in Russia and in the world, as well as disseminate and develop Russia’s cultural heritage, a field in which the humanities plays an important role.” (<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/40799>).

17. Max Bergmann; Tina Dolbaia; Nick Fenton, *Russia’s Adaptation Game: Deciphering the Kremlin’s ‘Humanitarian Policy’*, in Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-adaptation-game-deciphering-kremlins-humanitarian-policy>, December 14, 2022.

18. *Ibidem*.

reinforcing the idea that Russia has a rightful claim to intervene in the affairs of its neighboring states to safeguard its cultural and ethnic ties.

Moreover, when analyzing the role of religion in Russia's war on Ukraine, Roland Benedikter discusses the "apocalyptic eschatology now informing geopolitical realpolitik,"<sup>19</sup> highlighting how "in such intertwined ways religious rhetoric was combined with an ideology of nihilism."<sup>20</sup> Benedikter underlines:

"the inclination towards traditionalist religious nationalism as a unifying contextual political kit in the Russia of the Putin era (1999–present) has gradually been penetrated by – and amalgamated with – allegedly mystical yet in reality hyper-speculative geopolitical eschatologist philosophy. The goal of this merger has been to develop and strengthen a "metaphysical nationalism" – i.e. the superelevation of Russia's expansionist imperialism to a "war between the worlds" or a "clash of civilizations."<sup>21</sup>

The pivotal role of Aleksandr Dugin, the renowned author of *Foundations of Geopolitics* (1997) and a leading proponent of neo-Eurasianism, is also integral to the multifaceted context of the war in Ukraine. As Edward Stawiariski explains, Dugin's geopolitical ideas are deeply intertwined with his religious philosophy. Dugin envisions Orthodox Russia as the "Katechon" referenced in

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19. Roland Benedikter, *op. cit.* p. 182.

20. *Ibidem.*

21. *Ibidem.*

Thessalonians– “the bulwark against the Antichrist West,”<sup>22</sup> equating *the special military operation* to a kind of religious act: “It was one of the greatest decisions in world history because, religiously and geopolitically, it was the beginning of the fight against Satan.”<sup>23</sup>

There have been numerous statements and interviews of Dugin since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, which he frames as a *war against the West*, and R. Benedikter highlights a noteworthy aspect, that is the multitude of interviews he gave to various Italian channels, as he conceives Italy the *most Christian* European country, a focus that suggests a deliberate agenda:

“to present himself and the Russian leadership as the “real” Christians to Italian Catholics; to identify being a “real” Christian with a non-compromising, extremist and absolutist stance ready to attack and kill the other who is not of the same opinion for a “greater” “Christian” goal; to influence Catholics in favor of the Russian leadership; to create a legitimacy narrative of Russia’s war in Ukraine in a history beyond history; and in sum of all these aspects, to keep the Catholic pope Francis (Jorge Mario Bergoglio) from visiting Kyiv by appropriating the “defense of Christianity” rhetoric for the Russian authoritarian regime against Kyiv.”<sup>24</sup>

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22. Edward Stawiariski, “Aleksandr Dugin: ‘I see no reason why we should not use nuclear weapons’”, *The Spectator*, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/i-see-no-reason-why-we-should-not-use-nuclear-weapons-an-interview-with-russian-philosopher-aleksandr-dugin/>, January 2024.

23. *Ibidem*.

24. Roland Benedikter, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.



Although these tactics may have had some influence, events took an unexpected turn with the tragic death of Dugin's daughter in August 2022, leading to divisions between the two "brothers in the spirit of eschatology and the apocalypse:"<sup>25</sup>

"The criticism of Putin is getting louder. His former ideological mastermind Alexander Dugin (60), who has in the meantime distanced himself from him, declared that Russia had given its 'ruler' all the power 'to save the people and the state'. Should Putin fail to do so, Dugin said, he would face 'the fate of the Rain Tsar,' a character from a fictional study who fails to save his people – and is therefore overthrown and killed (Piatov 2022)."<sup>26</sup>

In sum, the war in Ukraine illustrated how religion can be co-opted to serve state interests, shaping not only domestic and international perceptions but also the very conduct of the conflict. This complex interplay between religion and politics in Russia's actions in Ukraine serves as a powerful example of how religious narratives can be deeply entrenched in the pursuit of geopolitical objectives. The Russian aggression in Ukraine has highlighted the instrumentalization of religion as a potent geopolitical tool, deeply intertwined with the broader strategies of the Russian state. The invasion, framed by Russian leadership as a defense of Orthodox Christianity and the "Russian World," has been legitimized through a fusion of religious and nationalist rhetoric, portraying Russia as a divine protector against evil Western influ-

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25. *Ibidem*, p. 186.

26. *Ibidem*.

ence. Moreover, the contributions of figures like Aleksandr Dugin, who combine religious eschatology with geopolitical aspirations, underscore the extent to which religious ideology has been leveraged to support Russia's expansionist goals.

### **Religious Rhetoric in Support of Aggression: The Russian Orthodox Church's Involvement**

As previously illustrated, the Russian Orthodox Church has been instrumental in intertwining Russian nationalism with religious identity, presenting this fusion as central to the nation's character. This narrative positioned Russia as a bastion of traditional Christian values, standing in stark opposition to what is portrayed as a morally decaying and corrupt West. By framing the nation as the defender of these values, the Russian Orthodox Church has contributed to the justification of military actions, casting them not merely as political or geostrategic pursuits but as spiritual and messianic missions aimed at preserving the moral integrity of the nation.

This section explores how religious rhetoric has been employed to legitimize aggressive actions and examines the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in supporting these narratives. As also analysed in the previous sections, in recent years, the intersection of religion and politics in Russia has become increasingly pronounced, with the Russian Orthodox Church playing a

significant role in shaping national identity and state policy. One of the most controversial aspects of this relationship has been the use of religious rhetoric to justify acts of aggression, particularly in the context of Russia's foreign policy.

Back in 2014, in the context of the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the Russian Orthodox Church depicted the region as “the cradle of Russian Christianity,”<sup>27</sup> underscoring its deep historical and spiritual significance to Russian identity. This narrative was further reinforced in 2020 with the construction of the *Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces* (*Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ*), built to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War. This unique cathedral illustrates the fusion between the vision of President Vladimir Putin, and support of the Russian Orthodox Church. It stands as a symbol of the blending of Russian nationalism, military strength, and Orthodox Christianity, reinforcing the belief that Russia's spiritual and historical destiny is intertwined with its geopolitical ambitions. The mosaics feature scenes from Russian history, portraying soldiers and historical figures alongside religious representations. Notably, they include depictions of the “1783: Bloodless Annexation of Crimea” and the “2014: Bloodless Reunification of Crimea.”<sup>28</sup> Through this architectural and ideological integration, the *Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces* underscores the

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27. Lena Surzhko Harned, “Holy wars: How a cathedral of guns and glory symbolizes Putin's Russia”, *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/holy-wars-how-a-cathedral-of-guns-and-glory-symbolizes-putins-russia-176786>, March 2, 2022.

28. *Ibidem*.

narrative that Russia's global mission is both a sacred duty and a political imperative.

Thus, it came as no surprise that just hours before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill praised Putin for his "high and responsible service to the people of Russia,"<sup>29</sup> consistent with a previous declaration he has made back in 2012, that Putin's rule was a "miracle of God."<sup>30</sup> The Patriarch also emphasized that the Russian Orthodox Church has "always striven to make a significant contribution to the patriotic education of compatriots"<sup>31</sup> and extolled military service as "an active manifestation of evangelical love for neighbors."<sup>32</sup> Patriarch Kirill called for the protection of civilians in Ukraine, reminding the Orthodox Christians the fraternal ties between the two nations, however, he has not condemned the war, instead attributing the conflict to "evil forces" seeking to undermine the unity of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>33</sup> Not only did the Patriarch refrain from unequivocally condemning the violence or calling for peace and an immediate end to the aggression,<sup>34</sup> but he also actively supported and legitimized Vladimir Putin's decisions.

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29. Jack Jenkins, "How Putin's invasion became a holy war for Russia", *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/03/21/russia-ukraine-putin-kirill/>, March 21, 2022.

30. Gleb Bryanski, "Russian patriarch calls Putin era 'miracle of God'", *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE81722Y/>, February 8, 2012.

31. Jack Jenkins, *op. cit.*

32. *Ibidem.*

33. Lena Surzhko Harned, *op. cit.*

34. There will be a Christmas truce called by Patriarch Kirill on January, 5, 2023, an "appeal to all parties involved in the internecine strife to cease

In her article, “The Role of the Orthodox Church in Advancing Putin’s War Messaging,” Natalia Dubtsova examined 58 sermons given by Patriarch Kirill between February 2022 and May 2023, as well as public statements he made during this time, and she compared his rhetoric with Kremlin communications and speeches by Putin. She illustrates how Patriarch Kirill’s rhetoric manipulates facts and “distorts biblical references to support the Kremlin’s military actions, shifting from prayers for peace to prayers for victory and urging the public to sacrifice for Russia’s political goals.”<sup>35</sup> Shortly after the invasion, on March 6th, Patriarch Kirill delivered a sermon marking the start of Orthodox Lent, in which he addressed the escalating political crisis in Donbass and framed the conflict in spiritual terms, stating “we have entered into a struggle that has not a physical, but a metaphysical significance,”<sup>36</sup> while directing his sharp criticism against the decadent West. Patriarch Kirill’s actions have sparked discontent and condemnation from clergy across Europe, the United States, Ukraine, and even within Russia, where dozens of lower-ranking clergy expressed their dissent by signing an “open letter decrying the invasion.”<sup>37</sup>

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fire and establish a Christmas truce from 12:00 PM January 6 to 12:00 AM January 8, so the Orthodox people can attend services on Christmas Eve and on the day of the Nativity of Christ.” (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/en/db/text/5992920.html>).

35. Natalia Dubtsova, *op. cit.*

36. Aidan Houston; Peter Mandaville, *The Role of Religion in Russia’s War on Ukraine*, in United States Institute of Peace, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/role-religion-russias-war-ukraine>, March 17, 2022.

37. “Russian Orthodox leader backs war in Ukraine, divides faith”, *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/18/russian-orthodox->

Throughout the ongoing war, the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church has maintained a central supportive role, from blessing soldiers and tanks to using his sermons to support Vladimir Putin and Russia's actions in Ukraine. The eulogy of Russian leadership has remained a central theme for the Russian Orthodox Patriarchy, with Patriarch Kirill seizing every opportunity to emphasize Vladimir Putin's messianic mission. Thus, on Putin's 70th birthday in October 2022, Patriarch Kirill declared that Putin's leadership of Russia was divinely ordained: "God put you in power so that you could perform a service of special importance and of great responsibility for the fate of the country and the people entrusted to your care."<sup>38</sup>

Two years after the invasion, the ties between the Russian leadership and the Russian Orthodox Church have become even more entangled, with Patriarch Kirill continuing to reinforce the rhetoric of Russia's holy mission in Ukraine. Thus, in March 2024, Patriarch Kirill presided over the Congress of the World Russian People's Council, which approved the document "Edict of the XXV World Russian People's Council," titled "The Present and Future of the Russian World."<sup>39</sup> The preamble of this document described it as both a programmatic statement of the World Rus-

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*church-ukraine-war/*, April 18, 2022.

38. "A gift of 'God': officials hail Vladimir Putin on his 70th birthday", *France 24*, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221007-a-gift-of-god-officials-hail-vladimir-putin-on-his-70th-birthday>, October 7, 2022.

39. Serhii Shumylo, "The Russian World of Patriarch Kirill as an apology of anti-Christianity, xenophobia, and violence", *Orthodox Times*, <https://orthodoxtimes.com/the-russian-world-of-patriarch-kirill-as-an-apology-of-anti-christianity-xenophobia-and-violence/>, April 23, 2024.

sian People's Council and a directive for Russia's legislative and executive authorities.<sup>40</sup> The *Special Military Operation* in Ukraine is defined as a *Holy War*, with Russia and its people portrayed as defenders of the unified geopoliticaspiritual space of *Holy Russia*. The operation is depicted as "a new stage of the national liberation struggle of the Russian people" against the decadent West.<sup>41</sup> The document further asserts that, following the war, „the entire territory of modern Ukraine should enter the zone of exclusive influence of Russia,”<sup>42</sup> excluding any possibility of an independent Ukrainian state. The *Edict* reiterates the uniqueness of the *Russian World* to further legitimize Russian expansionism, emphasizing that restoring the unity of the Russian people is "the key condition for the survival and successful development of Russia and the Russian World in the twenty-first century:"<sup>43</sup>

“Russia is the creator, supporter and protector of the Russian World. The borders of the Russian World as a spiritual, cultural, and civilizational phenomenon are significantly wider than the state borders of both the current Russian Federation and historical Russia. Along with the representatives of the Russian *oikoumene* scattered all over the world, the Russian World includes all for whom the Russian tradition, the shrines of the Russian civilization, and the great Russian culture are the highest value and meaning of life.”<sup>44</sup>

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40. *Ibidem*

41. *Ibidem*.

42. *Ibidem*.

43. *Ibidem*.

44. *Ibidem*.

## **Conclusion**

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict, while often framed in terms of military and geopolitical strategy, also has deep-rooted religious dimensions that are critical to understanding the broader implications of the war. The symbiotic relationship between the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church has not only reinforced Russia's soft power but also legitimized its aggressive actions through religious rhetoric. In contrast, the religious dynamics within Ukraine have played a vital role in shaping Ukrainian national identity, galvanizing resistance against Russian aggression.

The instrumentalization of religion by Russia, particularly through the Russian Orthodox Church, has served as a geopolitical tool, reinforcing narratives of exceptionalism and opposition to Western values. This religious rhetoric has been pivotal in justifying the invasion, with the Church's involvement providing a veneer of spiritual legitimacy to the war, presenting the conflict as both a spiritual and geopolitical mission.

By examining the religious dimensions, it becomes evident that the conflict is not merely a territorial dispute but also a clash where religion plays a seminal role in shaping the conduct of the war and its broader geopolitical narratives. Understanding this interplay between religion and politics is essential for comprehending the full scope of the conflict and its impact on regional and global order.



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# **The Aftermath of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict. Examining the Impact on Migration and Diasporic Communities in Ukraine Post-2022**

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*Eugeniusz Kuznicow-Wyszyński*

## **Introduction**

According to UNHCR's annual report, the number of internally displaced persons in the world already stands at around 90 million. This number has more than doubled in the last decade, after a relatively long period of stability. Year after year, the number is growing. War, violence, and persecution are the main reasons

why people flee their homelands. In 2021, the number of asylum seekers exceeded four and a half million.

Migration is not an automatic human response to violence and armed conflict. When deciding whether to flee, civilians usually assess the risk of a particular violence to their personal safety, the safety of their families and property. If the risk is high, they may decide to flee, but different people may react differently to the same threat. Some may flee immediately, others may feel that they have no possibility of escape or that family property in the conflict zone is more important than possible physical threats. Thus, people make a trade-off between opportunities, property and short-term physical risk. Surprisingly, poverty and its indirect determinants push people to migrate under normal circumstances, but they tend to make movement very difficult in high-risk situations. Conflict, vulnerability, poverty, unemployment and human rights violations are closely interconnected in a special way.<sup>1</sup>

## **From Historical Waves to the Current Crisis**

Outside of Ukraine, there are between 8.2 million (according to censuses of foreign countries) and 20 million (according to various estimates) people of Ukrainian descent. The first wave of Ukrainian emigration dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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1. EUR-Lex, *The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52011DC0743>.

centuries, i.e. the period of mass emigration of Europeans overseas. Up to 10% of the population of western Ukraine, which was part of Austria-Hungary, left for the New World. From the Ukrainian territories that were part of the Russian Empire, immigrants headed to the East, their number in 1895-1913 being at least 1.6 million. The second wave of emigration occurred during the interwar period. As a result of the defeat of the national liberation revolution of 1917-1920, economic emigration was supplemented by political emigration. Within the USSR, migration flows aimed at development of remote territories, involuntary migration became a significant segment. For example, at least 1 million dekulakised peasants were deported during the period of collectivisation. The Second World War and its aftermath triggered the third wave of emigration. In the western direction, it was almost exclusively political. In the eastern direction, it consisted of several components: forced evacuation and wartime refugee; repressive deportations of opponents of the Soviet government and the population considered "unreliable" by the Soviet government from Western Ukraine (in 1939-1940, up to 1 million people were deported, in 1944-1952 – over 200,000); and the organised deployment of labour to develop virgin lands and natural resources in Siberia and the Russian Far East. The fourth wave of emigration occurred at the end of the twentieth century and was primarily socio-economic in nature. As a result of the fourth wave, the old diasporas were significantly replenished, and new diasporas were formed in countries where there were practically no Ukrainians before, in particular in Southern Europe<sup>2</sup>.

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2. Заставний Федір, *Українська діаспора: Розселення українців у зарубіжних країнах*, Львів, Світ, 1991, с. 119.

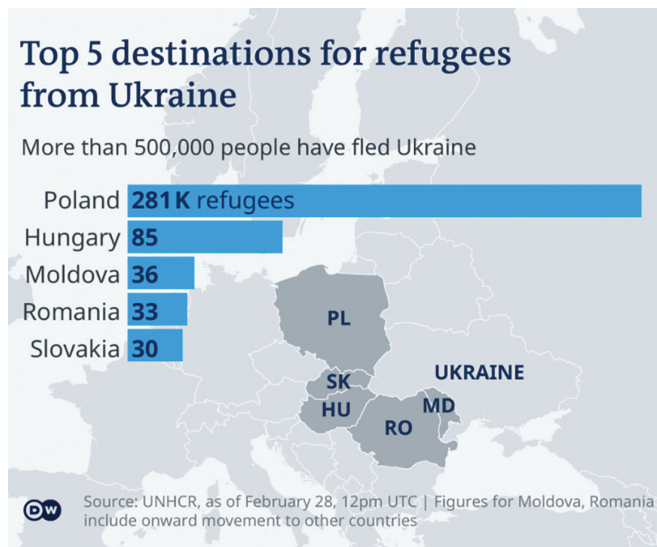
Significant geopolitical transformations have an impact on all aspects of society, including migration processes. The intensity, nature, and direction of migration in Ukraine have changed dramatically since the collapse of the USSR and the country's independence, which opened the country to the world and gave its citizens the right to freedom of movement.

A large scale of external migration was characteristic of Ukrainian society for a long time after the collapse of the USSR. However, in 2008-2009, the dynamics of migration became weaker. According to the All-Ukrainian Labour Migration Survey, 1.5 million Ukrainians worked abroad in 2005-2008, while in 2010-2012 this figure was 1.2 million. The decline was mainly due to the global economic crisis and a decrease in demand for Ukrainian workers in the EU and Russia. In 2005-2008, the most popular countries for Ukrainian labour migrants were Russia, Italy and the Czech Republic, while in 2010-2012, Russia and Poland were the main destinations. Pre-war migration was characterised by a more rational approach to choosing a destination country, driven by the experience gained over many years and a large network of migrants. Until 2014, most Ukrainian labour migrants came from the western part of the country, where migration has become a common method of coping with low wages and poverty.

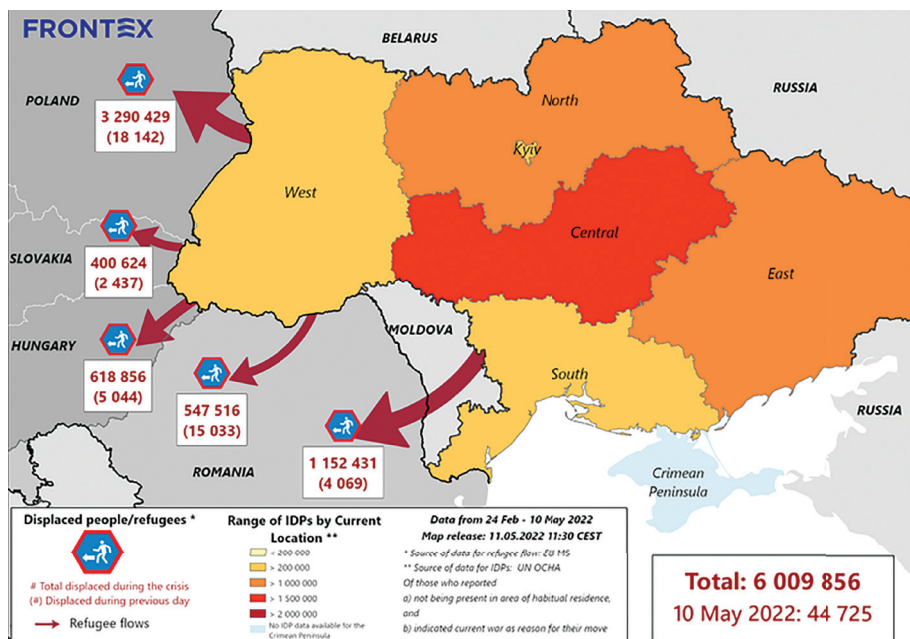
Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Syria was the main hot spot on the world map. The migration crisis caused by the war in Ukraine has brought renewed attention to the plight of displaced people. On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This marked a serious escalation

of the conflict in the Ukrainian Donbas, which has been ongoing since Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014. Millions of people have become both internally displaced and refugees who have crossed the country's border. Faced with the recent rapid increase in the number of refugees, countries across Europe and beyond have taken decisive action to support people saving their lives as part of the military conflict. In addition to foreign policy measures such as coordinated international sanctions against Russia, military support, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, both state and non-state actors are increasingly turning their attention to how to prevent an apparent humanitarian crisis from turning into a migration crisis, also known as the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

Below is the infographic showing the top five destinations for refugees from Ukraine as of February 28, 12 PM UTC. The total number of refugees exceeds 500,000 people. The data source is UNHCR.





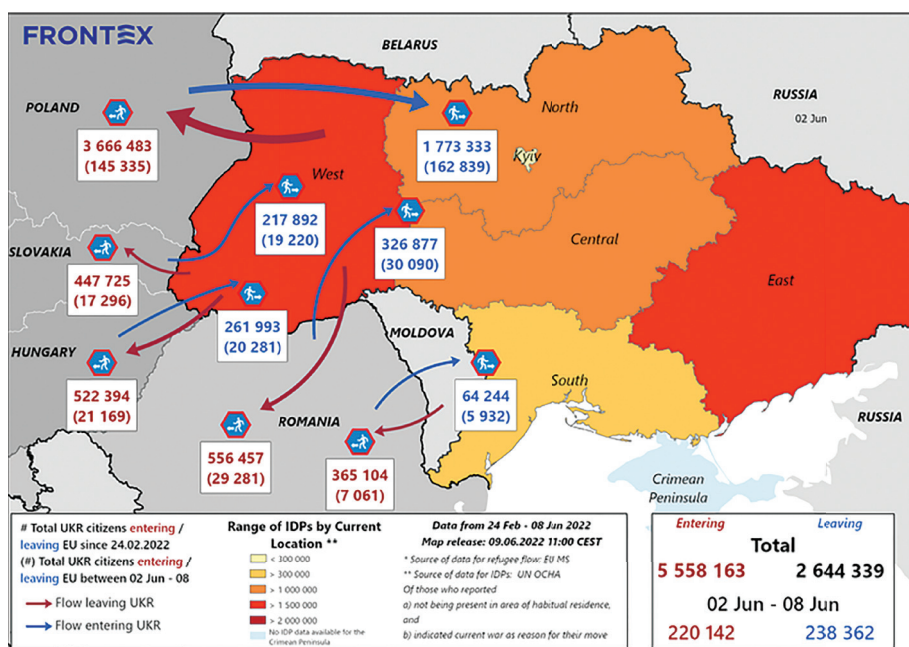


The image above is a map from Frontex showing the distribution and flow of displaced people and refugees from Ukraine to neighbouring countries as of May 10, 2022. The map includes data from February 24 to May 10, 2022, and provides a detailed breakdown of the total number of displaced people as well as those displaced. The map also shows the range of internally displaced persons (IDPs) within different regions of Ukraine, categorized by the number of displaced individuals. The total number of displaced people, including IDPs and refugees, is 6,009,856 as of May 10, 2022, with 44,725 displaced on that day alone.

The conflict in Ukraine has precipitated a significant humanitarian crisis, compelling over six million individuals to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighboring countries. Poland has emerged as the primary destination, hosting the largest number of refugees, underscoring its pivotal role in the regional response

to the crisis. Substantial influxes of refugees into other countries such as Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and Slovakia further highlight the extensive reach of the displacement. Internally, a considerable number of people have been displaced within Ukraine, particularly in the western, central, and southern regions, indicating widespread internal migration in search of safety. The data also reflect a continuous and dynamic flow of refugees, with substantial numbers of individuals being displaced on a daily basis.

The map below from Frontex shows the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Ukraine to neighbouring countries and within Ukraine's borders, as of June 8, 2022. The significant influx of refugees into Poland, which has taken in over 3.6 million people, demonstrates the country's role as the primary destination for those fleeing Ukraine. The continuous movement of people between June 2 and June 8, with more individuals re-



turning (238,362) than leaving (220,142), may indicate a partial stabilization or attempts to return to normalcy. The concentration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northern and western regions of Ukraine suggests these areas are relatively safer or better equipped to accommodate displaced individuals.

As of December 2022, more than 16.3 million Ukrainian refugees have been forced to flee Ukraine, and about 8 million more have become internally displaced<sup>3</sup>. The number of Ukrainian refugees worldwide is 8,075,440, according to data for 15 February 2023 from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This is about 20 percent of Ukraine's population. Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II and its aftermath, the first of its kind in Europe since the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, and the largest and most serious migration crisis in the world in the 21st century, with the highest rate of refugee flight in the world.

The main destinations of refugee migration are the neighbouring countries: Poland, Romania, Hungary, Moldova, and Russia. Some refugees then moved further west: to other European countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany) or outside the EU to America (mainly Canada and the USA).

Already on the first day of hostilities, some 100,000 people were displaced<sup>4</sup>. On the third day since the beginning of the Rus-

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3. Operational Data Portal - UNHCR, *Ukraine Refugee Situation*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

4. Meduza, *Война идет третий день. Больше ста тысяч украинцев уже стали беженцами*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/02/26/voyna-idet-trety-den-bolshe-sta-tysyach-ukraintsev-uzhe-stali-bezhentsami>.

sian invasion, 368,000 people left Ukraine, and on the fifth day – already 600,000<sup>5</sup>. In total, more than a million people left Ukraine during the first week of the war. Most of them emigrated to neighbouring countries, especially Poland, Moldova and Romania. Thus, as of 4 March, almost half of all those fleeing the hostilities had crossed the Ukrainian-Polish border.

The visa-free regime between Ukraine and the European Union allows citizens of Ukraine to freely cross the interstate borders of the countries of the European Union. The European Union and some countries have announced that they will be open to Ukrainians so that those fleeing the war do not go through the asylum procedure. Many of the victims were taken in by family members already living in the host country. That is why the number of refugees may vary in different sources, and official data may differ from the actual situation. In particular, this is due to the large flow of Ukrainian migrants who can enter some countries without a visa, as well as the lack of border controls within the Schengen zone. Before the invasion, Ukrainians had the opportunity to stay in EU countries for up to 90 days, but later some countries extended this period. Migrants of different nationalities who previously resided in Ukraine who have applied for protection status can receive a temporary residence permit for a period of one year with the possibility of extension<sup>6</sup>.

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5. Deutsche Welle, *EU agrees protection plan for Ukraine refugees*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-eu-agrees-protection-plan-for-refugees/a-60997378>.

6. European Commission, *EU Solidarity with Ukraine, Information for people fleeing the war in Ukraine*, accessed November, 15th, 2023: <https://eu-solidari->

On 4 March, the Council of the European Union voted at a meeting in Brussels to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for residents of Ukraine. It applies in exceptional cases to provide immediate and temporary protection to persons from non-EU countries who cannot return to their country of origin. The Directive was adopted in 2001, following difficulties related to the migration crisis caused by the Yugoslav wars. The main purpose of the document is to outline the legal status and mechanism for regulating the migratory flow in the event of a massive influx of refugees into the EU, in order to avoid overloading the asylum system. In more than 20 years of its existence, the directive was activated for the first time due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine<sup>7</sup>. It applies to all EU states except Denmark. Under the directive, residents of Ukraine can apply for the legal status of displaced persons, which is different from refugee status. In the case of temporary protection, people can move to any European Union country they want – for example, if they have relatives or acquaintances there. In the case of refugee applications, people must apply in the country whose border they crossed first, with no right to leave it until the application is finalised. Temporary protection status also removes restrictions on the length of stay in European Union countries.

So, from 4 March 2022 to 4 March 2025, the Temporary Asylum Directive is in place for war refugees in the EU to avoid the

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ty-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/information-people-fleeing-war-ukraine\_en.

7. Reuters, *EU plans to grant Ukrainians right to stay for up to 3 years*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-plans-grant-ukrainians-right-stay-up-3-years-2022-02-28/>.

standard asylum procedure in the European Union. Temporary shelter is provided<sup>8</sup>:

- ✓ citizens of Ukraine living on its territory on February 24, 2022,
- ✓ political refugees living in Ukraine,
- ✓ family members of the first two categories,
- ✓ holders of permanent and temporary residence permits in Ukraine who cannot return to their homeland for security reasons.

Thus, in light of the temporary protection and support given to Ukrainian refugees, it is worth noting that it is not only Ukrainian residents who are finding refuge within the EU. Also, huge numbers of Ukrainians, forced to flee war and Russian aggression, are forming new communities or integrating into existing Ukrainian diasporas around the world.

### **Catalysts of Support, Migration Dynamics, and Political Influence of the Ukrainian Diaspora**

Ukrainians abroad are one of the political and economic bridges between Ukraine and the international community. The Ukrainian diaspora de facto acts as an ambassador of its homeland in the host country, representing Ukraine's interests on certain continents.

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8. Council of the European Union, *Ukrainian refugees: EU member states agree to extend temporary protection*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/09/28/ukrainian-refugees-eu-member-states-agree-to-extend-temporary-protection/>.

This is evidenced by the strong ties between the Ukrainian diaspora and its homeland. Diasporas are involved in the development of cooperation in various fields from economy to culture, contribute to economic development, support democratisation processes or participate in influencing the public in their place of residence in favour of their country of origin. As a result, governments, political parties, international organisations and civil society groups have become increasingly interested in achieving their goals in a globalised world with the help of diaspora groups. Ukraine is no exception and is increasingly strengthening its relations with the Ukrainian diaspora around the world.

The study of the role of the Ukrainian diaspora in supporting Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression is an extremely relevant issue that is important not only from an academic point of view but also from a practical one, as it allows us to trace more deeply the process of diaspora influence on decision-making in their countries of residence.

This phenomenon is of particular importance as the year 2022, full of tragic and at the same time extremely important events for the Ukrainian nation, demonstrated not only the importance of the consolidation of the Ukrainian people but also the importance of supporting the diaspora. A special role in providing assistance to Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression is traditionally played by the Ukrainian communities around the globe. In the aftermath of the 2022 conflict between Russia and Ukraine, there has been a notable impact on migration patterns and Ukrainian diaspora communities. The conflict has led to a surge in the number of



Ukrainian refugees seeking safety and stability abroad. Many members of the Ukrainian diaspora have actively engaged in providing support and assistance to those affected by the conflict, both within Ukraine and among the displaced population.

Numerous Ukrainian communities live in Poland, Romania, Latvia, the United Kingdom, Estonia, France, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Germany, the USA and Canada, which are the largest (excluding ethnic Ukrainians in Russia) and many other countries. At the end of 2021, 1.57 million Ukrainian citizens were authorized to stay in the European Union, constituting the third-largest group of non-EU citizens, following citizens of Morocco and Turkey and at the same time Poland, Italy, and Czech Republic reported the highest number of Ukrainians holding valid residence permits.

The factor of ethno-confessional, cultural and linguistic proximity of citizens of Ukraine and Eastern European countries, as well as their historical past, which form a similar set of values, is also important. Such an open approach to Ukrainian citizens seeking asylum is also explained by the fact that Ukraine is a neighbouring country and a kind of “protective shield” for the EU in terms of its security priorities. Finally, the factor of the Ukrainian diaspora in the EU countries also has an impact. The role of the ethnic diaspora in accepting refugees is extremely important: compatriots, possibly relatives and friends, can significantly reduce the burden on state structures, especially in border countries, by providing the necessary humanitarian and financial and financial assistance.



Between 2013 and 2021, the number of Ukrainians holding residence permits increased by more than 25,000 in five EU Member States: Poland (up 476,000), Czech Republic (up 86,000), Hungary (up 50,000), Slovakia (up 48,000), and Lithuania (up 29,000). These five Member States collectively accounted for 95.1% of the overall increase observed across the entire EU. Notably, Poland alone contributed to approximately half (50.1%) of the EU-wide increase in the number of Ukrainians holding residence permits lasting at least 12 months during the period 2013–2021. For comparison, Poland represented 65.7% of the EU-wide increase in the total number of Ukrainians holding residence permits during the same period<sup>9</sup>. According to official data, there are 1,79,000 ethnic Ukrainians living in the United States<sup>10</sup>, but in reality, there are at least 2 million, and up to 1.3 million in Canada (ethnic Ukrainians make up about 4% of the total population of Canada)<sup>11</sup>.

Although the number of Ukrainians out of the total population of all of the states is small today, they have gained significant political influence. Therefore, the country's diaspora has great political and economic weight. This largely determines the country's extremely negative attitude towards Russia's policy towards

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9. Statistics Explained, *Ukrainian citizens in the EU*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ukrainian\\_citizens\\_in\\_the\\_EU#Ukrainian\\_citizens\\_authorized\\_to\\_stay\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ukrainian_citizens_in_the_EU#Ukrainian_citizens_authorized_to_stay_in_the_EU).

10. Migration Policy Institute, *Ukrainian Immigrants in the United States*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/ukrainian-immigrants-united-states>.

11. The Canadian Encyclopedia, *Ukrainian Canadian History and Settlement*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/ukrainian-canadian-history>.

Ukraine, and leading EU, USA<sup>12</sup> and Canadian politicians are forced to listen to the mood of the people. It is important that this diaspora is the best organized and has created an unprecedented number of public, political, cultural, educational and scientific institutions — in fact, Ukrainian society in all EU, America or Canada. At the same time, it is deeply integrated into them, which ensures its influence and the opportunity to lobby for the interests of the Motherland.

For example, given the developed democratic institutions in North American societies and the civic and political activity of the Ukrainian community, it has become one of the most successful Ukrainian lobbies, playing a significant role in Ukraine's independence. Last year, along with the Ukrainian community of the European Union, it also became a powerful factor in informational and political opposition to the Russian Federation and lobbying for the interests of Ukraine in the international arena.

Ukrainians have their own newspapers abroad, magazines, TV channels, have the opportunity to appear on local channels,

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12. As a curiosity, according to the US Department of Homeland Security, over the past 5 years, an average of about 1.1 million immigrants have been coming to the United States each year. On average, each immigrant annually contributes about \$100,000 a year to the country's economy. This includes consumption, real estate, and product creation. According to a study by the U.S. Institute of Immigration and Citizenship, immigrants annually contribute \$1.7 trillion to the U.S. economy. This is about 11% of the country's GDP. If we calculate that one Ukrainian per year creates at least \$20-30 thousand for the economies of the countries where they are located, then Ukrainians make an annual contribution to the economies of other countries of more than \$100 billion. This means that Ukraine is under-receiving it. No contribution to the economy, no jobs, no filling of the budget.

communicate with foreign journalists, and publish various information and analytical leaflets in which they try to tell the truth. Such information sources of the Ukrainian diaspora include, for example: “The Ukrainian Weekly”, “Svoboda” (Свобода), “Time and Events” (Час і події), “Bulgarian News” (Болгарські вісті) etc. Information and political support for Ukraine is provided in each country mainly through non-governmental organisations established by representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora. For example, in the United States, it is the Ukrainian National Information Service, and in Canada, the Information Bureau of Ukraine, whose task is to disseminate information about Ukraine and its policies in these countries and, if possible, in other countries and to lobby for its interests.

Since the large-scale invasion, the Ukrainian diaspora in various countries has made a tremendous contribution to the struggle to support Ukraine. This support has been made possible by the tremendous work of the Ukrainian diaspora, whose representatives have not left the streets of the world’s largest cities since the beginning of the war. On 27 February, more than 20,000 Ukrainians gathered in Toronto to protest under the slogan #StandWithUkraine. It was the largest gathering of Ukrainians in Canadian history. The diaspora demanded that the Canadian government close the skies over Ukraine and disconnect Russia from the SWIFT international payment system. Canadians also took to the streets of Toronto together with Ukrainians. In particular, thanks to the influence of the diaspora and the work done by Ukrainians abroad to consolidate Canadian society, the Trudeau

government has become one of its strongest partners. The situation is similar with the US, the UK and other major European countries. Similarly, on 27 February 2022, one of the largest rallies in support of Ukraine took place in Berlin – 500,000 people rallied against Russian aggression and expressed their position on the war. A large part of the organisational work was carried out by representatives of the diaspora, who continued to put public pressure on the German authorities.

At the end of March, Ukrainian activists blocked the passage of lorries carrying goods from the EU to Russia on the border of Poland and Belarus. The blockade lasted for several days, during which time the queue of trucks stretched for 55 kilometres. As a result, this escalated into new sanctions – the EU ordered the trucks from Russia and Belarus to leave the territory of the Union by 16 April, which they did.

The Ukrainian diaspora actively contributes to Ukraine's economic development amid Russian aggression. Primary economic support comes in the form of financial transfers, largely directed towards family members. Beyond remittances, the diaspora plays a crucial role by fostering trade relations, making investments in the homeland, establishing and sustaining businesses, and sharing foreign expertise. The distinction between remittances and investments is noteworthy, as money transfers impact GDP growth and inflation, whereas ventures such as business establishments or investments in securities, including vital government bonds like military bonds, represent direct investments in the Ukrainian economy. The Ukrainian diaspora actively promotes trade by nurturing economic connections between the home country and

the destination, involving both producers and consumers. To enhance the economic prospects of Ukraine, the diaspora fosters state-to-state relations, influencing the negotiation and implementation of various economic agreements, primarily in a bilateral context. Notably, the diaspora's substantial support for Ukraine's economy has manifested in the areas of military aid and financial loans. Collaborative efforts, such as joint appeals to governments, signature collection, and proposal submissions, facilitate these contributions. Additionally, Ukrainians abroad play a proactive role in supporting Ukraine's economy by advocating for sanctions in their countries of residence and urging the avoidance of Russian goods, energy, and services. The overarching goal is to diminish the influence of the Russian Federation and prevent further aggression against Ukraine.

Support for the diaspora is provided through influential international non-governmental associations of Ukrainians: the Ukrainian World Congress, the World Congress of Free Ukrainians and others. In each country where the Ukrainian diaspora is represented, there are dozens to hundreds of such associations, their number depending on the strength of influence of Ukrainians in the country and their number. Cooperation with governments and international organisations is not only for the sake of securing the interests and rights of the Ukrainian diaspora but also for the benefit of the Ukrainian state, for which diaspora representatives exert pressure, demanding political, economic, diplomatic and military assistance<sup>13</sup>.

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13. Global Ukraine, *Diaspora organizations and their humanitarian response in Ukraine*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://global-ukraine.gbhs.fr/uk/>.

The contribution of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC), the organisation that coordinates Ukrainian community organisations in the diaspora, uniting 20 million Ukrainians in most countries, is also significant. Since Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, the UWC has been working to promote the development of Ukrainian diaspora organisations. The UWC has been striving to become a true global epicentre of Ukrainianisation, which is in the interest of both Ukrainians living in Ukraine and those living abroad. That is why the Ukrainian diaspora today invests in various areas. It is in the reconstruction of houses for internal refugees, in the Armed Forces, in the purchase of drones, armoured vehicles, and trucks (financing the repair and modernisation of this equipment). For example, the Ukrainian World Congress has already raised over \$90 million to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The priorities of the Ukrainian World Congress are Ukraine's victory in the war, post-war reconstruction and a strong Ukrainian world abroad. In 2022 alone, the Ukrainian World Congress provided \$50 million in military aid to Ukraine. In September 23, the UWC handed over 15 new British tracked armoured personnel carriers (thirteen FV432s, one CVRT Stormer and one CVRT Shielder) to the Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces. For example, on 24 February 2023, a large-scale rally in support of Ukraine was organised in nearly 400 cities around the world. These actions were covered by local media, and Congressional representatives give interviews in the language of their country of residence to tell the truth about the war. Another area of their work is to build a strong Ukrainian world, as the main problem now is the lack of Ukrainian schools

and kindergartens. It is important that Ukrainian children learn the Ukrainian language and do not lose touch with their homeland. If children do not know the Ukrainian language and culture, they will not return to Ukraine. Ukrainian schools and kindergartens are an opportunity for Ukrainian refugees to get a job and not be dependent on government social support. At the moment, UWC actively negotiating with the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and European ministries to develop a plan to create a network of Ukrainian kindergartens and schools<sup>14</sup>.

The head of the Ukrainian World Congress, Pavlo Grod, says that some people will return on their own after the war ends (including refugees who stay near the border to return as soon as possible). The situation with Ukrainians who have adapted to life abroad is more complicated, as Ukraine needs to create conditions for their return. One of the effective tools is to allow multiple citizenship so that Ukrainians can easily come to work in other countries or do business. Another important step is to involve as many refugees as possible in the elections that will take place after the war. People need to feel that they are still part of Ukraine<sup>15</sup>.

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14. Forbes Ukraine, «Діаспора надала Україні допомоги на \$500 млн». Голова Світового конгресу українців Павло Грод про повернення біженців, сильний український світ та боротьбу з російською пропагандою, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://forbes.ua/war-in-ukraine/rekordni-vtrati-rosiyan-misyats-nastupu-na-avdiivku-ta-zsu-na-livomu-berezi-dnipra-shcho-vidbuvaetsya-na-fronti-oglyad-vid-forbes-15112023-17288>.

15. *Ibidem*.

## **Conclusion**

The unity of the Ukrainian diaspora first emerged in 2014, in response to the onset of the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea, and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. This collective effort brought together both the established and the newly formed diaspora, as well as bridged generational gaps between the young and the old. The cohesion achieved proved remarkably potent. The diaspora's solidarity with Ukraine resulted in several countries expressing readiness to offer military and economic assistance even before the full-scale invasion. On February 24, 2022, following the complete invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, a new chapter unfolded for the Ukrainian diaspora abroad. This marked a period of intensified collaboration as they rallied to support Ukraine. Since that pivotal date, the Ukrainian diaspora has effectively demonstrated its unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and its leadership. The global impact of their initiatives has garnered considerable attention, drawing widespread support from both the majority populations and various ethnic minorities in the countries where the diaspora resides.

Since the onset of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the significance of the Ukrainian diaspora and its role in advancing Ukraine's soft power has become increasingly evident. Beyond the financial aid and charitable donations mobilized by the diaspora, its members actively contribute non-financial forms of diaspora capital, including their social, political, and intellectual influence. Remarkably, in



recent months, the political engagement of the Ukrainian diaspora has reached unprecedented levels. Ukrainians worldwide are fervently representing the interests of their homeland, directing attention to the atrocities unfolding on its soil. Ongoing rallies in various countries persist, with impassioned calls for an end to the war, economic and military assistance, the condemnation of Russia's actions against Ukrainians as genocide, and the classification of Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.

The diaspora around the world is actively engaged in political protests against the Russian invasion, writing official letters and petitions to international organisations, holding information marches and pickets in front of diplomatic missions of the Russian Federation, Belarus and a number of other countries, as appropriate, and protests are also held near the main buildings of the countries (parliament, parliamentary council) in case of insufficient assistance to the Ukrainian people. Together with these, representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora are developing initiatives to restore Ukraine and find specialists to help rebuild and raise the country. Hence, the Ukrainian diaspora has exhibited a remarkable capacity for mobilization, coupled with a steadfast determination to support Ukraine and actively contribute to its development. This commitment not only enhances the effectiveness of resistance against external adversaries but also plays a pivotal role in elevating Ukraine's standing on the international stage.

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The Canadian Encyclopaedia, *Ukrainian Canadian History and Settlement*, accessed November, 15th, 2023, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/ukrainian-canadian-history>.

# The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Russian-Ukraine War

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*Kudzai Cathrine Bingisai*

## Introduction

There are several threats to the protection of cultural heritage including climate change, armed conflicts, theft and neglect.<sup>1</sup> Armed conflicts pose a major global challenge in the contemporary global arena. The exacerbating cultural heritage destruction incurred during armed conflicts has gained increasing attention in the contemporary system. Regional and internationally, cul-

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1. J. A. Zarandona, "A Path Well Worn? Approaches for the Old Problem of Heritage Destruction", in *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Destruction*, Routledge, 2024, pp. 1-34.

tural heritage is being targeted in times of armed conflicts. It is mostly in armed conflicts that cultural heritage has been exposed to destruction and this situation has been worsened by digital technology advancements in the 21st century.<sup>2</sup> During times of conflicts and geopolitical invasions, heritage is under attack more than it can be in a non-conflict environment. Yet, it is during the war that it is vital to protect all forms of cultural heritage. In this case, cultural heritage should not be viewed as just stones and buildings as they carry an identity of the past, present and future generations. Hence, it could be argued that armed conflicts are raising an alarm about the urgent concern to protect and conserve cultural heritage.

A massive scale of cultural heritage destruction has been realized in times of war in the global arena. The literature presents that massive destruction of cultural heritage have occurred during the First and Second World Wars.<sup>3</sup> Other contemporary armed conflicts in the global arena have also witnessed the destruction of cultural heritage for instance Iraq<sup>4</sup>, Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>5</sup> and

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2. E. J. Techera, "Protection of Cultural Heritage Times of Armed Conflict: The International Legal Framework Revisited, *Macquarie J. Int'l & Comp. Envtl. L.*, 2007, 4, 1.

3. N. Pollard, "Cultural Property Destruction and Damage in Two World Wars 1", in *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Destruction*, Routledge, 2023, pp. 257-267.

4. R. Fisk, *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq (Vol. 1)*, Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2008.

5. J. W. Dworzecki, *The Destruction of Cultural Property of the Muslim Community during the War In Bosnia And Herzegovina*, *Museology & Cultural Heritage / Muzeologia A Kulturne Dedicstvo*, 2024, 12(2).

Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup> The Iraq invasion in 2003 saw the destruction of property including the Mesopotamian archaeological site, Abbasid-era palace as well as Ottoman-era mosque.<sup>7</sup> This paper focuses on the destruction of Ukraine's cultural heritage which has escalated concern of safeguarding cultural heritage since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and its impact on cultural heritage tourism. Such destruction has led to poly challenges in the region as well as at the international level including socio-economic and political environment. This study argues that the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war affects people, culture, identity social economic and political sectors. Amongst the challenges of the Russian-Ukraine war is a threat to cultural property and heritage tourism. Yet, the protection of cultural heritage is important in the aspect of socio-economic pillars for sustainable development. The war has brought intense critical debates about the destruction of cultural heritage.<sup>8,9</sup> Hence, this study sought it fitting to contribute to the discussions on the complexities of the protection of cultural heritage and cultural heritage tourism in the Russian-Ukraine war.

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6. H. B. Mekonnen, "Practices and Challenges of Cultural Heritage Conservation in Historical and Religious Heritage Sites: Evidence from North Shoa Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia", *Heritage Science*, 2022, 10(1), p. 172.

7. B. Isakhan, "Heritage Destruction and Spikes in Violence: The Case of Iraq", *Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs*, Brill, 2013, pp. 219-247.

8. C. Mick, "The Fight for the Past: Contested Heritage and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine", *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, 2023, 14(2), pp. 135-153.

9. Y. D.-K. Ivashko, "Destruction of the Architectural Heritage As A Result Of War: The Experience of Reconstruction (Conservation and Logistical Aspects)", *International Journal of Conservation Science*, 2024, 15 (2).

## **Literature review**

### **Cultural heritage and tourism**

The concept of culture is most often referred to as the relationship between the man-made world and the world we are living in.<sup>10</sup> Culture implies diverse nations and nationalities inclusive of their cultural heritage (tangible or intangible property), distinguishing them. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, expresses that culture plays a significant role in sustaining socio-economic sectors through generating revenue by tourism.<sup>11</sup> In this case, cultural heritage is vital since it promotes economic growth and performance. It can therefore be argued that culture signifies the relationship between the people and their surrounding environment. The importance of preserving cultural heritage is that it is passed from one generation to another.<sup>12</sup> According to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural Heritage natural heritage adopted on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1972, expressed that cultural heritage is comprised of three groups-

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10. F. Rahman, "Save the World versus Man-Made Disaster: A Cultural Perspective", in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 2019, Vol. 235, No. 1, P. 012071, IOP Publishing.

11. UNESCO, *The 2009 UNESCO Framework For Cultural Statistics (FCS)*. Prepared by the Institute for Statistics of The United Nations Educational, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed on 27 August 2024, <https://Unstats.Un.Org/Unsd/Statcom/41stSession/Documents/BG-FCS-E.Pdf>.

12. A. R. Szromek, "Sharing Heritage Through Open Innovation—An Attempt to Apply the Concept of Open Innovation in Heritage Education and the Reconstruction of Cultural Identity", *Heritage*, 2024, 7(1), pp. 193-205.

monuments, groups of buildings and sites. Hence, the destruction of such cultural heritage whether intentionally or unintentionally cannot be accepted since monuments, buildings and sites all define cultural heritage. The armed conflicts destroy both the socio-cultural environment and people's lives.

Indeed, there have been concerns over the violation of international law and the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. For instance, the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 provide rules and regulations for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage. Article 1 of the first protocol Hague 1954 provides the importance of movable or immovable cultural property to cultural heritage. Such property ought to be safeguarded and protected (Article 2, Hague 1954). The concern and the questionable issue is the respect for international law by international actors. Article 4 (3) mandates contracting parties to protect cultural heritage from any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation, and any acts of vandalism. The destruction of cultural heritage amidst international law is a serious problem. This reveals the significance and importance of further analysis of the protection of cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war. Despite the various international conventions present in the protection of cultural heritage, it reflects that the international community is not adequately responding to the protection of cultural heritage. In this case, the destruction of cultural heritage in the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war reflects the other side that international law is not comprehensively respected and regulated in times of armed conflicts.



A major concern is that instruments that seek to protect cultural heritage are present at both local and international levels, where both Russia and Ukraine are signatories, yet there is destruction of cultural heritage. Signing the Conventions of protecting cultural heritage, implies that Russia and Ukraine had pledged to protect World Heritage Sites.

Cultural heritage tourism is visiting cultural heritage sites, for example, archaeological sites, historical buildings, music and dance, folk arts, theatre, ethnic cultures/communities and people's traditional culture.<sup>13</sup> Cultural heritage tourism is considered an effective way of promoting sustainable development because it promotes employment creation and opportunities to promote the protection of cultural heritage.<sup>14</sup> Such, heritage tourism incorporates socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects and traditions of societies. Heritage tourism is also a branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring. Furthermore, the benefits of sustainable cultural heritage tourism include enhancing the sense of identity of a community or region, promoting intercultural or international understanding and broadening community horizons. Cultural heritage tourism can be a strong influence to recognize, preserve and economically strengthen such heritage for future generations through sustainable socio-cultural, ecological and economic practices.

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13. N. B. Lwoga, *Tourism: Meaning, Practices and History*. Dar es Salaam University Press, 2011.

14. R. Croes; V. Shapoval; M. Rivera; M. Baki; P. Zientara, "Promoting residents' happiness through a human-centric approach to tourism city development", *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, (2024).

The significance of economic growth and sustainable development also lies in the promotion of tourism. Tourism which can be in the form of internal or international involves visitors, the environment and the host.<sup>15</sup> In this case, people travel for various motivations that are including business or leisure. In addition, heritage tourism education is reinforced through the conservation of cultural property. Culture and cultural heritage tourism has been used for socio-cultural, environmental, psychological and educational developments that provide benefits to communities around the world. Cultural heritage tourism could be of educational development to benefit communities' appreciation of heritage property and its contribution to archaeological and educational resources.

In Ukraine, Zaporizhzhya Oblast was established to promote cultural heritage through tourism.<sup>16</sup> Raising people's awareness of the value of cultural heritage is fundamental in promoting the overall richness of World Heritage. Educational tourism provides the opportunity for one to learn that country's traditions, language as well as culture.<sup>17</sup> The importance of tourism in Ukraine is also

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15. X. D. Lehto, "Transforming the Guest-Host Relationship: A Convivial Tourism Approach", *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 2020, 6(4), pp. 1069-1088.

16. I. A. Arsenenko, *Development of Tourist and Local Research Activities in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Ukraine*, International Multidisciplinary Scientific Geoconference, SGEM 2020, 5, pp. 709-716.

17. A. M. Kbachin, "Scenarios of the Development of Enterprises of the Tourist Industry of Ukraine in the Conditions of the War and Post-War Periods", *Financial and Credit Activity Problems of Theory and Practice*, 2023, 2(49), pp. 313-325.

reflected in its Strategy of Tourism and Resorts 2017-2026 which targeted to promote which sought to attract tourism in the region. This Strategy aimed towards promoting cultural heritage tourism, signifying that cultural property could be potentially one of the most important areas in promoting the country's economic growth. However, the unforeseen global events particularly the Russian invasion of the region brought the situation and the aspiration to another unimagined position. The Strategy of Tourism and Resorts for Ukraine had targeted to promote the safety of tourists and increase the number of domestic and foreign tourists by 5 times and 2.5 times respectively. The socio-political environment indeed has to be peaceful for an influx of tourists. Moreover, the idea is that tourists recommend others to the destination when they are pleased by a peaceful environment filled with rich and diverse cultural heritage. Many conflict zones have witnessed the destruction of cultural heritage and a compromise on the promotion of heritage tourism.

Cultural heritage is an important factor for tourist attraction.<sup>18</sup> Tourism not only is vital for Ukraine but also global economic growth. The global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth which was expected to slow to 3.6% in 2022 from 6.1% in 2021 worsened by 0.8% points and 0.2 cents for the years 2022 and 2023.<sup>19</sup>

18. R. A. De Oliveira, "The Perception of UNESCO World Heritage Sites' Managers about Concepts and Elements of Cultural Sustainability in Tourism", *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 2024, 14.

19. I. K. Irtyshcheva, "The Economy of War and Postwar Economic Development: World and Ukrainian Realities", *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, 2022, 8 (2), pp. 78-82.

Ukraine's, economic development has been greatly affected since the 2013 armed conflict.<sup>20</sup> The author further states that Ukraine received 1.1% of the global population as tourists, a decline as compared to a growth of 19.2% in the years 2000 to 2008. Darvidou, (2020) stated that in 2019, Ukraine's travel and tourism had a GDP of only 1.4%. To make matters worse, Ukraine's tourism sector has been greatly threatened by Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the 2022 Russian-Ukraine war. The period from 2019 to the beginning of 2022 has been challenging due to travel restrictions induced by Covid 19.<sup>21</sup> In this case, it is established that Covid-19 has made it challenging for the tourism industry across the globe including in Ukraine, however, the situation has been made worse by the outbreak of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

There has been a continuous record of Ukraine's economic challenges since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the 2022 invasion of Russia in Ukraine has greatly affected Ukraine's development of tourism.<sup>23</sup> It is established that tourism promotes a country's development, cultural pride, and employ-

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20. E. Sass, "The Impact of Eastern Ukrainian Armed Conflict on Tourism in Ukraine", *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 2020, 30, pp. 880-888.

21. L. Plzáková; E. Smeral, "COVID-19 Pandemic, the War in Ukraine and Looming Risks for Tourism's Recovery", *Tourism Economics*, 2024, 30(2), pp. 277-282.

22. I. Irtyshcheva; I. Kramarenko; I. Sirenko, "The economy of war and post-war economic development: world and Ukrainian realities", *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, 2022, 8(2), pp. 78-82.

23. V. Yermachenko; S. Melnychenko; M. Sidak; T. Dupliak; T. Lositska, *Sustainable tourism in the post-war reconstruction of territorial communities in Ukraine*. Access to science, business, innovation in the digital economy, ACCESS Press, 2024, 5(1), pp. 34-57.

ment opportunities as well as promotes the country's appreciation on a global map. However, all these have been compromised on development and growth by the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war. The destruction of cultural heritage and human lives is both a loss to local and global society. The major concern is how to protect cultural heritage and at the same time prioritise the protection of human beings during the realities of war. During the war, priority is often given to humanitarian with minimum effort to preserve the historical context, culture and property.

Accordingly, the Russian-Ukraine war records cultural heritage destruction compromising the achievement of sustainable development goals.<sup>24</sup> This paper argues that the destruction of cultural heritage by armed conflicts infringes international law and impedes the promotion of the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The UN SDGs recognize the importance of cultural heritage and SDG 9 which promotes industry, innovation and infrastructure connects to the protection of cultural heritage. Furthermore, SDG 11.4 reinforces strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.<sup>25</sup> The major concern is how cultural heritage can be protected from the challenges of armed conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What should be done to protect cultural heritage in the complex environment for the present and future generations?

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24. P. Pereira; W. Zhao; L. Symochko; M. Inacio; I. Bogunovic; D. Barcelo, "The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict will push back the sustainable development goals", *Geography and Sustainability*, 2022, 3(3), pp. 277-287.

25. United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), 2015.

Acknowledging that during an armed conflict, there are various targets and aims of the attacker to the enemy, the effects extend to the cultural, socio-economic and political environment of the regional and international environment. Consequently, the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage becomes part of any armed conflict.

### **The protection of cultural heritage**

Ukraine is one of the countries that has the destruction of both tangible and intangible heritage due to armed conflict. In addition to the destruction of cultural heritage, the Russian-Ukraine war is restructuring the international system as well as the transformations of Ukraine's socio-cultural and economic environment. Ukraine's Constitution commits to protecting cultural heritage. It has been observed that the Ukrainian Constitution No 2680-VIII dated February 7, 2019, in article 11 asserts that the State ought to promote its history, tradition as well as culture. The Constitution further on in Article 54 expresses the protection of cultural heritage. In paragraph 5 of Article 54, provides that "the State ensures the preservation of historical monuments and other objects of cultural value and takes measures to return to Ukraine the cultural treasures of the nation that are located beyond its borders."

The article expresses that the law is responsible for protecting and safeguarding Ukrainian cultural heritage in the country as well as abroad. Article 54 also grants its citizens protection of intellectual

property and freedom to express various intellectual activities in the form of literary, artistic, scientific and technical creativities.

Article 66 of the Ukrainian Constitution mandates the citizens to promote the protection and conservation of nature as well as cultural heritage. While, Article 92 (6) strengthens the protection of culture, health care and ecological safety. Furthermore, Article 116 (3) mandates the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to ensure the implementation of the protection of science, culture and management of the environment. Article 116(4) provides for the implementation of national programs of economic, scientific, social and cultural development of the State. All these selected articles provide a commitment to the protection of cultural heritage. The major question is to what extent is this implemented amidst the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war.

A review of the Russian Federation's Constitution of 1993 with Amendments through 2014, Articles 44, 71(f), 72(e) and (f), 74 and 114(c), provides for the protection and conservation of cultural and historical heritage. Specifically, Article 44 (3) states that "Everyone shall be obliged to care for the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage, and to protect monuments of history and culture." In this case, it can be noted that Russia, like Ukraine both countries have integrated the protection of cultural heritage in their respective regions as reflected in their national Constitutions.

Indeed, the situation and concerns about the protection of cultural heritage became more outward on the 24th of February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine. The war broke out just after

the global world had been trying to come back on its feet from the challenges of Covid-19. The war not only shook global geopolitics, socioeconomic security and State relations but also drastically destroyed the cultural heritage of Ukraine. Unfortunately, the war has both directly and indirectly affected many of the archaeological sites, destroying the cultural heritage in Ukraine and its cultural heritage tourism sector. Ukraine had very much potential for cultural tourism due to its rich Slavic culture.<sup>26</sup> The war has witnessed the destruction of historical and ancient sites in Ukraine and more destruction is expected as the war evolves. UNESCO has updated that 432 heritage sites have been destroyed since 24 February 2022 and these comprise 139 religious sites, 214 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 31 museums, 32 monuments, 15 libraries, and 1 archive.<sup>27</sup> The statistics reflect that archaeological sites and buildings that hold historical significance for the Ukrainian people have been damaged as well as infringed on national and international law. During the ongoing war, evidence of attack, destruction and looting of cultural heritage as well as humanitarian challenges are experienced.<sup>28</sup> The war

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26. I. Bondarchuk-Chugina, *Tendencies and Strategies of Cultural Tourism Development in Ukraine*, The Academy of Management and administration in Opole, Opole, 2019.

27. UNESCO, *Damaged Cultural Sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO*, 2024, accessed on 27 August 2024 at <https://Www.Unesco.Org/En/Articles/Damaged-Cultural-Sites-Ukraine-Verified-Unesco>.

28. Y. Ivashko; A. Dmytrenko; A. Pawłowska; M. Lisińska-Kuśnierz; M. Krupa; P. Tišliar; A. Shpakov, "Destruction of the Architectural Heritage As A Result Of War: The Experience of Reconstruction (Conservation and Logistical Aspects)", *International Journal of Conservation Science*, 2024, 15(2).



has compromised heritage tourism which requires global order, peace and security in the host region and external regions. In this regard, the socio-economic and political environment has been restructured making it not conducive for cultural heritage tourism. The global arena has felt the effects of the war indifferent to the geographical region. At the time of writing of this paper, the war has been an ongoing issue and the timeline of the war remains unknown. In this case, the impact of the war on cultural heritage may not be fully determined until the war is over, but indicators point to some serious destructions on cultural heritage and the challenges in the global arena.

Acknowledging that there is a continuous update of information on the challenges of the protection of cultural heritage and their impact this study sought to analyse the surrounding issues on the protection of cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war. Despite the vast literature that has been published on the Russian-Ukraine war, there is a dearth of literature related to the impact of the war on cultural heritage tourism. Based on the understanding of cultural heritage as a factor that has an impact on the promotion of heritage tourism, this paper explores the protection of cultural heritage amidst armed conflicts. Scholarly research in cultural tourism among others, topics can be site-specific such as Ukraine's tourism system<sup>29</sup>, and heritage and / or historical sites<sup>30</sup>

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29. A. Mazaraki; M. Boiko; M. Bosovska; N. Vedmid; A. Okhrimenko, "Formation of the National Tourism System of Ukraine", *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 2018, 16(1), pp. 68-84.

30. O. A. Marchenko; A. Postol; T. Marusei; N. Babko; V. Semendiak; M. Salnikova, *Trends and Characteristics of the Ukrainian Touristic Industry Develop-*

visitor-specific and sustainable development.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, cultural heritage plays an important part in the interpretation and promotion of heritage tourism. Indeed, the Russian-Ukraine war is due to complex and interwoven causes, however, this paper did not seek to discuss the factors responsible for the Russian-Ukraine war but, to discuss the destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine and its impact on heritage tourism and overall achievement of SDGs. There is still a need to better understand the protection of cultural heritage tourism in armed conflicts. Hence, it is timely for this paper to focus on the protection of cultural heritage and tourism in the Russian-Ukraine war.

## Methodology

This study made use of a comprehensive qualitative research methodology using secondary data sources (such as books, journals, reports and policy documents related to the protection of cultural heritage). The study used the keywords “Ukraine cultural heritage tourism, cultural heritage tourism, culture, heritage, tourism” to get relevant information for this paper. The challenges

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*ment in War Conditions and the Prospects for Emerging from the Crisis*, Revista de la Universidad del Zulia, 2024, 15(42), pp. 407-427.

31. Z. Seneta; I. Dubovich, “Development of Rural Tourism in Ukraine In The Context of Sustainable Development”, *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development*, 2022, Vol. 22, Issue 3.

in protecting cultural heritage in times of armed conflicts have brought concerns to the sustainability of heritage tourism. Hence, this study sought to focus on literature to determine such issues related to the protection of cultural heritage and the complexities of cultural heritage tourism in Ukraine.

## Results and discussion of findings

The study presented major concerns on the protection of both cultural heritage and human beings in an armed conflict. This paper finds that the interconnectedness of the impact of the destruction of cultural heritage invited massive attention to respond to the destruction of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is intentionally targeted during armed conflicts.<sup>32</sup> The popular discourse analysis surrounding cultural heritage is that it is vital for the socio-cultural and economic sector. The findings presented that during an armed conflict, civilian protection is equally important as cultural heritage. Such destruction of cultural heritage not only means the loss of historical sites, it also implies economic loss and tourism development. The destruction of museums and historical sites equally means that the potential revenue from tourism is compromised.

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32. Z. E. Atabay; A. Macedonio; T. Teba; Z. Unal, "Destruction, heritage and memory: post-conflict memorialisation for recovery and reconciliation", *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 2024, 14(4), pp. 477-496.

Promoting cultural heritage goes in hand with promoting tourism thereby stimulating socio-economic growth and cultural heritage protection. How can cultural heritage tourism be promoted when historical sites are no more? It is the rich cultural properties such as values, statues, and museums that tourists seek to experience for both domestic and international tourism.

Furthermore, the study presented that the Russian-Ukraine war redefined or restructured international relations and cooperation. The research findings presented that there has been a decrease in tourist migration to Ukraine due to the war.<sup>33</sup> The ongoing Russian-Ukraine war demonstrated an exacerbated impact on the tourism sector as an economic pillar of the country. The negative impacts of war not only affect the host country but also extend to the neighbouring countries in terms of factors such as reduction of visitors, peace and security threats. The Russian-Ukraine war has compromised the tourism sector in the region as well as reducing flights in some of the neighbouring countries such as Finland and Moldova.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, the research findings presented that cultural heritage ought to be protected as it significantly promotes heritage tourism and the spillover effects to sustainable economic growth.

There is an interlink between cultural heritage and tourism, the major concern is how far that heritage can be conserved amidst armed conflict. The study found that where there is conflict, her-

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33. P. Gabryjończyk; I. Kudinova, *Tourism in wartime Ukraine—condition, restrictions and prospects*. Turystyka i Rozwój Regionalny, 2023, (19), pp. 29-38.

34. P. Pereira; W. Zhao; L. Symochko; M. Inacio; I. Bogunovic; D. Barcelo, "The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict will push back the sustainable development goals", *Geography and Sustainability*, 2022, 3(3), pp. 277-287.

itage tourism is discouraged. The importance of cultural heritage to Ukraine's economic development cannot be overestimated. Cultural heritage in Ukraine is either damaged or promoted looting of artefacts during the armed conflict amidst the immense pressure and concern for the protection of heritage. It is acknowledged that collateral damage, looting and deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war.<sup>35</sup> Collateral damage, forced neglect, looting and trafficking, and strategic damage are provided by UNESCO as forms of destruction to cultural heritage. Despite acts of looting during armed conflict being considered a crime of conduct against the protection of cultural heritage, site looting has continued to prevail and expanded in the Russian-Ukraine War, making it difficult to protect valuable heritage tools. Such acts of stealing reflect that the low level of awareness of the importance of the protection of cultural heritage needs to be addressed. The government and responsible authorities responsible for the implementation of the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine should enhance awareness towards the conservation of such property.

The contemporary global arena has seen cultural heritage becoming an important aspect in promoting socio-development. However, such development is facing a major challenge due to the armed conflicts. The ongoing Russian-Ukraine war imposes considerable social and economic effects on cultural property and will not only lead to the destruction of property but also to long-

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35. E. H. Nyekwere; N. A. Duson, "A Legal Assessment of the Environmental, Humanitarian, and Economic Impacts of the Russia/Ukraine Armed Conflict", *IRLJ*, 2022, 4, p. 46.

term effects on the national identity. Cultural property is attacked as a strategy for ethnic cleansing.<sup>36</sup> The situation of heritage and identity cleansing is that it is not renewable as such ought to be safeguarded. Aljazeera on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 presented that as the Russian-Ukraine war gets to the 916th day, the city hall building had been destroyed due to the attack on the eastern town of Kupiansk in Ukraine. This study argues that the ongoing war and its impacts push for a fundamental rethink of the protection of cultural heritage in an armed conflict. With a vast array of cultural property Ukraine and the international community are confronted by the challenges of protecting heritage property. Despite researchers reflecting on the resilience of the Ukrainian army against the Russian troops<sup>37</sup>, the protection of cultural heritage ought to be protected since the recovery of lost property as well as the economic sector might take a long time.

Cultural heritage is vital for a sustainable society and that society is built by its people/ citizens. However, the challenge is that the destruction of cultural heritage negatively affects the psychological well-being of society. It is on a sad note that armed conflicts come along with devastating trauma on citizens.<sup>38</sup> The authors further explain that traumatic memories of events of the war

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36. F. Rosén, "NATO and Cultural Property", *PRISM*, 2023, 10(3), pp. 44-58.

37. Y. Alshamy; C. J. Coyne; N. P. Goodman; G. Wood, "Polycentric defense, Ukraine style: explaining Ukrainian resilience against invasion", *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice*, 2024, 39(1), pp. 36-58.

38. Z. E. Atabay; A. Macedonio; T. Teba; Z. Unal, "Destruction, heritage and memory: post-conflict memorialisation for recovery and reconciliation", *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 2024, 14(4), pp. 477-496.

are something that needs to be dealt with as post-trauma recovery. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the Russian-Ukraine war has led to internal and external migration and displacement of Ukrainians as well as foreigners who had been residing in the country, most of them have sought refugees due to the war. The war has created displaced Ukrainians and worsened concerns over humanitarian needs. Statistics revealed that the war had caused more than 6.2 million people to leave Ukraine migrating to neighbouring countries and beyond.<sup>39</sup> These findings reflect a compromise on the protection of cultural heritage as well as the promotion of cultural heritage tourism.

While cultural heritage in Ukraine has been ravaged, some properties have been protected from the Russian troops such as Monument to Volodymyr the Great, Monument to Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Monument to Bohdan Khmelnytsky.<sup>40</sup> There have been efforts to protect heritage from the impacts of the war. However, Ukraine's cultural heritage sites such as Regional Art Museum. G. Galagana, Palace of Culture. T.G. Shevchenko and Kherson Regional Universal Scientific Library – Kherson have been destroyed due to the Russian-Ukrainian war.<sup>41</sup> Such monuments which have been hit across the country have been landmarks for

39. E. M. Austria, *Displaced Persons from Ukraine – Summarizing Overview of Austrian Measures in the Period February 2022 to June 2023*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Vienna, 2024.

40. *The Moscow Time*, 4 April 2022, *Kyiv Hurries to Protect Statues from Russian Attack*, accessed on 29 August 2024, at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/04/04/kyiv-hurries-to-protect-statues-from-russian-attack-a77124>.

41. UNESCO, *Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO*, 2024, accessed on 27 August 2024, at <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco>.

Ukraine's heritage and tourist views. The destructed cultural heritage is not all that has been recorded. Such destruction is not only a loss to Ukraine but also to World Heritage sites as recognised and accredited status by UNESCO. The Russian-Ukraine war affects the community in their connection with their heritage during and after the war. The efforts to preserve cultural heritage in Ukraine seem to be overwhelming due to the complexities of the war. Although the international community recognizes the importance of cultural heritage and measures for tangible and intangible cultural heritage, there is little evidence that the community is on track with protecting the heritage. The major question is how cultural heritage can be protected best during the armed conflict and in this case reference to the Russian-Ukraine war. How can international law promote the safeguarding of cultural property, ideas, and values for future generations? Cultural heritage reflects a historical image of past generations and an identity for forthcoming future generations.<sup>42</sup> The major concern is how both tangible and intangible heritage will reflect a heritage when it is under massive attack in war. The study establishes that cultural heritage attracts tourists to experience the cultural significance of history, tradition and art which the experience is different from country to country. Indeed, there have been attempts to protect the cultural heritage of the Russian-Ukraine war. It follows from the debates and analysis that the most urgent concern to be solved in an armed conflict is

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42. M. J. Jeong; S. M. Rheem; Y. H. Park; R. Nurtazina; M. Tkach, "Loss and damage of Ukraine's cultural heritage: actions of the Russian Federation today compared to Germany during World War II", *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 2024, 81(1), pp. 84-92.



the protection of cultural heritage. It is during times of crisis that cultural heritage is vulnerable and under intentional attack for a great impact on ethnic and identity cleansing.

Furthermore, the European Union quickly issued sanctions on Russia due to its acts on the war, however, such sanctions on Russia greatly restructured the global energy security issues.<sup>43</sup> The war has caused an increase in oil and energy prices as well as threatened the global socio-economic sector. The rate of inflation in most countries in Europe, Africa and the rest of the world has been soaring. Despite the Russian-Ukraine war impacting different regions, the global economic sector has been shaken.<sup>44</sup> Commodity and energy prices have drastically increased in the African region.<sup>45</sup> The increase in oil and petroleum prices has pushed airline costs to rise in the global aviation industry.<sup>46</sup> Hence, amid the war, there is an urgent need to determine the disruptions in the travel industry and their implications for cultural heritage tourism.

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43. F. A. Putra; H. S. D.Nugrahani; I. M. A. Yogiswara; M. A. Arifin, "Power Shifting Global Politics From The European Union (EU) To The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): Analysis A Critical Analysis of The Russian-Ukrainian War", *Asian Journal of Social and Humanities*, 2024, 2(9), pp. 1899-1913.

44. W. J. Hussein, "The Economic and Political Consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian War", *The American Journal Of Interdisciplinary Innovations And Research*, 2024, 6(05), pp. 37-42.

45. J. K. Manboah-Rockson; R. Y. Adjuk; T. D. Dawda, "The Geopolitics of the Russian-Ukrainian War: Implications for Africa in International Relations", *European Journal of Development Studies*, 2024, 4(4), pp. 14-24.

46. C. Chu; H. Zhang; J. Zhang; L. Cong; F. Lu, "Assessing impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on global air transportation: From the view of mass flight trajectories", *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 2024, 115.

Culture and heritage tourism have always worked together in the tourism sector. Sustainable cultural and heritage tourism is challenging yet at the same time carries economic benefits. The UNESCO of 1972 Paris Convention stressed that:

“the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction.”

Such an increase and continual destruction of Ukraine’s cultural heritage has been condemned at both national and international levels. However, it seems that there has not been quite adequate action to save the destruction of most of the artefacts. The findings reinforced a deliberate attack on monuments by the Russian soldiers during the Russian-Ukraine war.<sup>47</sup> The war also reflects a concern about the lack of effective preparedness to move cultural heritage for safeguarding and protection. The research findings present that priority was most given to the humanitarian rescue. The major issue could be that the Russian-Ukraine war caught the global system not prepared to handle the challenges and the issue of preparedness to effectively move cultural heritage to a safe environment was compromised.

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47. C. Mick, “The Fight for the Past: Contested Heritage and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine”, *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, 2023, 14(2), pp. 135-153.

The media has covered the Russian-Ukraine war and reported extensively on the destruction of cultural heritage. For instance, CBS News presented Ukrainian concerns about the massive looting and destruction of churches by the Russian forces.<sup>48</sup> The aim was to promote awareness of the challenges of the protection of cultural heritage. The study found that cultural heritage destruction in times of war becomes more savage as technological advancement develops. With technological advancement which can cause a wide impact on destructions, it reveals that it is not only property that is under attack but the cultural cleansing. Technological advancements vastly destroy cultural heritage at a massive rate.<sup>49</sup> The conservation and protection of cultural heritage should be equally promoted in an armed conflict; however, the major concern is how cultural heritage property can be best protected during war for the promotion of heritage tourism.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper sought to contribute to the analysis of the complexity of heritage tourism and armed conflicts. This study sought to analyse

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48. CBS Online, 30 June 2024, *Ukraine accuses Russia of looting museums and destroying churches as part of a heritage war*, accessed on 29 August 2024, at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-accuses-russia-museum-looting-church-destruction-60-minutes-transcript/>

49. J. A. G. Zarandona; E. Cunliffe; M. Saldin, "A Path Well Worn? Approaches for the Old Problem of Heritage Destruction", in *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Destruction*, Routledge, 2024, pp. 1-34.

complex issues surrounding the intentional destruction and protection of cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war. The major critical issue that emerges during armed conflicts is the destruction of cultural heritage. The Russian-Ukraine war which broke out on 24 February 2022 has without any doubt, a disastrous impact on the heritage tourism sector and extends beyond socio-economic and political stability. This study concludes that the destruction of cultural heritage is increasingly manifesting despite the presence of national and international laws. The study concluded that there is an utmost concern for the protection of cultural heritage, the promotion of peace and the revitalization of the heritage tourism sector in the Russian-Ukraine war and other armed conflicts in the global arena. In this regard, the already existing legal instruments have the scope of protection of cultural heritage but it is the complex geopolitical interests that result in the complications for the protection of cultural heritage and cultural heritage tourism.

Despite the Russian-Ukrainian war shaping new realities in cultural heritage tourism, there is still hope for the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. In response to the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage, the digitalization of cultural property should be enhanced to assist in post-war reconstruction. Acts of looting and stealing should not be tolerated as they threaten the notion of the protection of cultural heritage, such stolen property should be returned for maintaining cultural heritage. National and international governance must promote conservation of the cultural heritage, as it helps attract tourists for economic growth and helps a country to be distinctive on the

global map. Above all, the peace resolution between Russia and Ukraine contributes to the overall achievement of SDGs.

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# Integration without Accession: Ukraine's path to EU membership amidst conflict

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*Alexandru Mocernac*

## Introduction

Ten years after signing the initial chapters of its Association Agreement with the European Union and over two years since formally applying for EU membership, Ukraine now finds itself in a position to further deepen its ties with the EU. Despite facing numerous challenges, including the ongoing conflict with Russia and the need for extensive domestic reforms, Ukraine has shown resilience in its pursuit of European integration. Its commitment to aligning with EU standards, particularly in areas like governance, rule of

law, and economic reforms, has been evident. The general orientation of the Ukrainian people, since the 2014 revolution known as ‘Euromaidan’, has supported the pro-European efforts of the Ukrainian leadership<sup>1</sup>. This shift has altered Ukraine’s image in the West, transitioning from a formal alignment with European values seen during Leonid Kuchma’s regime in the 90s to a visible commitment to the European path today. However, despite widespread public support and the strong commitment of Ukrainian leaders to join the European Union, significant challenges remain in achieving this goal. The foremost obstacle is Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukrainian territory, but issues such as corruption, a struggling economy, and potential difficulties in meeting EU accession criteria also cast doubt on Ukraine’s prospects of becoming a member of the European Union.

Considering the obstacles that Ukraine faces in joining the European Union and the unpredictable nature of the conflict with the Russian Federation, it is understandable that researchers explore various scenarios and strategies to make Ukraine’s EU membership aspirations a reality. In this context two questions arise: Can Ukraine achieve a meaningful integration within the European Union without formal accession? And if so, what frameworks could lead to such integration?

Assuming these two questions that form the spine of our examination, we will try to highlight the potential pathway Ukraine

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1. Olga Onuch, “Ukrainians’ Unwavering Path Toward the EU”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/06/ukrainians-unwavering-path-toward-the-eu?lang=en>, last consulted on 02.09.2024.

could take toward integration with the European Union, even in the absence of full membership. By analyzing current geopolitical dynamics, the existing EU enlargement framework and the domestic reforms under way in Ukraine, we aim to shed light on the viability of an alternative form of integration and the steps that could bridge the gap between aspiration and reality.

The article will proceed as follows: first we will explore the relations between European Union and Ukraine in order to better understand the dynamics and course of bilateral relations. This will be followed by an analysis of the concept of integration without accession to identify possible solutions for Ukraine, applying Andrew Moravcsik's theory of liberal intergovernmentalism to identify potential solutions for Ukraine. Ultimately, we aim to identify a viable alternative for Ukraine accession to EU in its current circumstances.

## **The Dynamics of EU–Ukraine Relations**

The process of Ukraine's accession to the European Union started under unprecedented conditions, caused by the large-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. In a swift response to Moscow's decision to attack Ukraine, the European Commission has delivered its positive opinion towards Ukraine's application for EU membership submitted by Kiev on February 28, 2022, just four days after the beginning of the conflict. Just six days after

the historic decision on June 17, 2022, taken by the European Commission, the European Council granted Ukraine candidate status<sup>2</sup>. This unprecedented decision to grant EU candidate status to a country engaged in an active armed conflict, resulting from an illegal invasion by another state, served as a beacon of hope for the Ukrainian people. It also carried powerful symbolic significance, marking Ukraine's renewed alignment with the West. More than a year after Ukraine was granted candidate status, the European Commission issued in November 2023 a recommendation to open accession negotiations with Ukraine, which was endorsed by the leaders of the EU Member States in December 2024<sup>3</sup>. This event materialized in the organization of the first intergovernmental conference between ministers and ambassadors of the EU Member States and those of Ukraine. What is known as the "accession conference" was meant to present to the candidate state the negotiating clusters (areas in which the candidate state has to implement reforms)<sup>4</sup>, concretizing the national ideal of the Ukrainian state.

However, even under difficult geopolitical conditions, the European Union's swift response to Ukraine's application to become a member state would not have been possible without the good bilateral cooperation relations built over the years. The first interactions between EU and Ukraine were established after Ukraine

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2. European Council, "Ukraine", <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/ukraine/>, last consulted on 02.09.2024.

3. *Ibidem*.

4. Conference on accession to the European Union-Ukraine, "Accession document", 21 June, 2024.

became independent in December 1991, when the European Community recognized the sovereignty of the Ukrainian state and the independence of the Ukrainian people. Soon after the first interactions, in June 1994, Ukraine signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union, an agreement that established an extended framework for bilateral cooperation<sup>5</sup>. Just four years after the Agreement was signed, in June 1998, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine ratified Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma decree entitled `Strategy of Ukrainian integration to European Union` through which the Ukrainian leaders at that time assumed the political orientation as well as the European Union membership status<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately for the Ukrainian people, the strategy adopted by the Ukrainian leaders has remained only a political tool that has contributed to its dissociation from the Russian Federation rather than an ideal of joining the European Union. Just as nowadays, but under different geopolitical circumstances, we see that in the 1990s Ukraine tried to build its independence on the theme of return or reunification with Europe<sup>7</sup>, the main

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5. Denys Kuzmin and Iryna Maksymenko, "Analysis of the EU – Ukraine relations in the context of the Association Agreement and related documents and the EU 2014-2020 financial perspective", in Silvo Devetak; Olesea Sirbu (eds.), *Analyses of EU – Partner countries' relations: Reflections from Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine*, Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, Mari-bor, 2012, p. 464.

6. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Про затвердження Стратегії інтеграції України до Європейського Союзу" (Strategy of Ukrainian integration to European Union), 11 June, 1998, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/615/98?lang=en#-Text>, last consulted on 04.09.2024.

7. Denis Kuzmin and Iryna Maksymenko, *op. cit.*

difference being that nowadays, the Ukrainian people are outside the Russian sphere of influence and even oppose it.

Following the ratification of the presidential decree, the EU Common Strategy on Ukraine was signed at the European Council in Helsinki, establishing key objectives for Ukraine's relationship with the EU. This strategy set out the benchmarks Ukraine needed to meet to demonstrate its commitment to European values. Based on this strategy, Ukraine undertook several significant actions to strengthen its ties with Europe and the international community. These included ratifying and implementing the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), joining the Council of Europe and the OSCE, participating in the "Partnership for Peace" program, signing the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership with NATO in Madrid in July 1997, ratifying the European Convention on Human Rights or beginning negotiations for accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO)<sup>8</sup>.

Between 1998 and 2004 (the year of the launch of the European Neighborhood Policy), the Ukrainian leaders staked, at least in terms of image, on Ukraine's accession to the European Union. In this regard, a new strategy entitled 'Strategy of economic and social development of Ukraine for 2004-2015 "In the way of European integration"' was adopted, which envisaged the reforms necessary for the Ukrainian state's accession to the EU<sup>9</sup>. However, until December 2004, when the European Neighborhood Policy was created no significant progress has been made in implement-

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8. *Ibidem*, p. 468.

9. *Ibidem*.

ing the reforms necessary for Ukraine's accession to the EU<sup>10</sup>. Only, with the adoption of the ENP and the launch of the Ukraine-EU Action Plan, in the context of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine things began to take shape, with the Action Plan guiding the progress Ukraine needed to implement. The specific areas covered by the Ukraine-EU Action Plan included areas such as strengthening the rule of law, citizens' rights and freedoms, Ukraine's cooperation with international organizations (including WTO accession), strengthening the economic sector through the transition to market economy status or Ukraine's access to the single market<sup>11</sup>.

The next step in the EU-Ukraine bilateral relations was realized with the introduction of Association Agreements for the countries involved in the ENI. Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU, although negotiated since 2007, has been delayed by the EU due to the authoritarian regime imposed by President Victor Yanukovich<sup>12</sup>. Even with the implementation of the Eastern Partnership as a part of ENI and Ukraine's inclusion in it in 2009, President Yanukovich's authoritarian style of leadership and its desire to get closer to Russia has remained unchanged, ignoring Ukraine's deteriorating relations with the EU. Ukraine's Association Agreement with the European Union was signed only in June 2014, after

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10. *Ibidem*, pp. 175-177.

11. European Union External Action, "European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans", <https://eubam.org/publications/european-neighbourhood-policy-action-plans/>, last consulted on 04.09.2024.

12. Gunta Pastore, "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement prior to the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit", *TalTech Journal of European Studies*, vol. 4, Issue 2, 2014, pp. 5-19, <https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/bjes-2014-0012>, last consulted on 07.09.2024.



the installation of the new Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, following the Euromaidan uprising. The signing of this document was an affirmation of the Ukrainian people's desire to break away from the influence of the Russian Federation and join the European states. The Association Agreement included enhanced cooperation in areas such as justice, freedom and security, trade and trade-related matters, economic and sectorial cooperation or financial cooperation<sup>13</sup>. Building on this agreement, cooperation between the European Union and Ukraine was further strengthened through various complementary, specific agreements designed to bring Ukraine closer to its goal of obtaining EU membership and to enhance collaboration with EU member states.

## **Integration without Accession in Ukraine's context**

In the current geopolitical climate, where an active conflict initiated by the Russian Federation threatens Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, Ukraine's chances of joining the European Union are slim. Member States cannot risk engaging in an open conflict within the borders of a fellow member<sup>14</sup>, particularly given that the EU lacks a unified military force coordinated at the institutional

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13. EUR-Lex, "Association agreement with Ukraine", <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/association-agreement-with-ukraine.html>, last consulted on 07.09.2024.

14. Euractiv, "European countries do not want conflict on EU territory", February 2024, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/eu-not-prepared-to->

level. Additionally, the process of aligning with EU requirements and implementing the reforms necessary for accession requires, in addition to funds, certain criteria to be met (e.g. holding a referendum on EU accession so that citizens legitimize the whole process). But Ukraine, with an ongoing conflict on its territory, cannot afford to meet these criteria. Even after the end of the conflict, Ukraine will be engaged in a reconstruction process in which the European Union will play an essential role by supporting with funds and logistics. However, under the conditions outlined above, the implementation of the reforms included in the six negotiating clusters (Fundamentals, Internal Market, Competitiveness and inclusive growth, Green agenda and sustainable connectivity, Resources, agriculture and cohesion, External relations<sup>15</sup>) will be extremely difficult. Moreover, in addition to the financial difficulties that Ukraine is facing or will face at the end of the conflict, we also have to take into account the long period needed for the proposed structural changes in the areas covered by the negotiating cluster. The whole process of reforms, coupled with efforts to rebuild the country and the conflict fatigue of the Ukrainian people, may hinder Ukraine's accession to the European Union, slowing down the progress required to meet EU membership criteria.

In this context, the application of an integration framework without accession would be opportune as it could facilitate EU support for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, keeping open the path towards accession within a well-defined timeframe. One way

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*include-country-at-war-in-eu-says-former-commission-chief-barroso/*, last consulted on 07.09.2024.

15. Conference on accession to the European Union-Ukraine, *op. cit.*

of applying the integration without accession is known as external differentiated integration which refers to the varying degrees to which third countries align with or closely engage with specific aspects of the EU's *Acquis Communautaire*, without being granted access to the EU's core decision-making bodies<sup>16</sup>. This model of integration without accession is usually applied where the political regime hinders the reforms needed to meet the Copenhagen Criteria and manifests itself by integrating those sectors that are less politicized and that meet in one form or another the requirements of the European Commission<sup>17</sup>. In the case of Ukraine where the political regime in Ukraine is cooperating with the European Union and is open to all reforms necessary for accession, the concept of differentiated external integration can be applied to those sectors that are not greatly affected by the conflict or that will be able to recover most quickly following the end of the conflict. A further condition is added by revitalizing those sectors so that they can be competitive on the European market and meet all the requirements imposed by EU legislation.

At this stage, we can appeal to the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism theorized by Andrew Moravcsik, which offers a broad framework for analyzing interstate interactions and stands

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16. Ebru Turhan, "Thinking out of the Accession Box: The Potential and Limitations of Internal and External Differentiated Integration Between Turkey and the EU", in Matthias Waechter (ed.), *Europe – Against the Tide*, Denkart Europa, Mindset Europe, Vol. 28, 2019, pp. 43-60, <https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/9783845292762/europe-against-the-tide>, last consulted on 07.09.2024.

17. *Ibidem*.

as one of the foundational theories in the study of regional integration<sup>18</sup>. This theory suggests that states are the principal actors functioning within an international system of anarchy, where no central authority governs their actions. To pursue and achieve their primary interests or objectives, states rely on intergovernmental negotiations rather than a centralized authority to make and implement policy decisions<sup>19</sup>. Liberal intergovernmentalism argues that national preferences are mainly shaped by issue-specific, predominantly economic, interests of influential domestic groups, which often take precedence over geopolitical considerations<sup>20</sup>. Another assumption of Intergovernmental Liberalism is that states are intentionally rational and that they calculate the utility of the decisions they make, being constantly aware of the alternatives available to them<sup>21</sup>. In this context, Moravcsik, emphasizes that collective outcomes are the result of the interaction of the individual actions of state actors in the process of realizing their goals. Thus, the cooperation or the realization of supra-national

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18. Andrew Moravcsik; Frank Schimmelfennig, "Liberal intergovernmentalism", in Antje Wiener, Tanja Borzel and Thomas Risse (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 64-65, <https://www.oxfordpoliticstrove.com/display/10.1093/hepl/9780198737315.001.0001/hepl-9780198737315>, last consulted on 12.09.2024.

19. *Ibidem*.

20. Cemal Karakas, "EU-Turkey: Integration without Full Membership or Membership without Full Integration? A Conceptual Framework for Accession Alternatives", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 6, 2013, pp. 1057-1073, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jcms.12061>, last consulted on 12.09.2024.

21. Andrew Moravcsik; Frank Schimmelfennig, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

institutions are nothing but rational choices of the states realized through intergovernmental negotiations<sup>22</sup>.

Taking into account the main characteristics of the interaction between states offered by the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism, differentiated external integration it may be a viable approach for advancing the relationship between the EU and Ukraine. On the one hand, Ukraine could receive certain guarantees of future membership, after the complete rebuilding of both its economy and infrastructure as well as after the settlement of territorial disputes with the Russian Federation and at the same time it could integrate step by step various economic or social sectors, reaping the benefits of deepened cooperation with EU Member States. On the other hand, EU member states could choose to maintain close cooperation with Ukraine without bearing the responsibility of granting membership to a country still embroiled in conflict and struggling with a war-torn economy. At the same time, they can advance their own economic interests by expanding trade and investment with Ukraine, while both private companies and governments from EU member states take active roles in Ukraine's reconstruction efforts.

The concept of differentiated external integration offers mutual benefits for both Ukraine and EU member states while safeguarding the latter from potential risks. Furthermore, by integrating Ukrainian economic sectors or making substantial investments in Ukraine, EU member states could establish institutions or new frameworks to manage bilateral relations and advance their inter-

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22. *Ibidem*.

ests. This approach would ensure that any negative aspects of the cooperation are mitigated by these newly created mechanisms, thus protecting the EU member states.

## **Conclusion**

The award of EU candidate status to Ukraine, while a reaction to the Russian Federation's aggression, also reflects the strong bilateral relations developed over time, particularly following Ukraine's signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union in 2014. This progress is a testament to the effective cooperation between Ukraine and the EU and also the significant reforms Ukraine undertook from 2014 to 2022. Without this solid foundation of cooperation and the advancements made during this period, Ukraine's attainment of candidate status would not have been feasible. Even so, fulfilling all the conditions included in the six negotiating clusters, implementing the reforms and mechanisms requested by the European Commission as well as aligning Ukrainian legislation with the European one are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in the conditions of a large-scale conflict with an aggressor that continues to mobilize and send troops to conquer Ukrainian territories. Even after the conflict has ended and Ukraine's borders have been secured in one form or another, the process of rebuilding civilian, governmental and military infrastructure, overcoming the trauma caused by the war

and returning to a functioning economy will take an extremely long time (the World Bank Group estimated earlier this year that it would require approximately \$486 billion over the next decade to rebuild Ukraine<sup>23</sup>).

Given that Ukraine's chances of joining the EU are extremely low, even if the conflict were to end in the near future, the idea of integration without accession, as proposed by the concept of differentiated external integration, emerges as one of the most viable solutions for advancing cooperation between the EU and Ukraine.

Nevertheless, the long-term viability of sectoral integration without offering prospects for integration may be questionable. Ukraine in our case, or any other partner state included in such an integration process without accession, may no longer recognize the benefits of sectoral cooperation or, on the contrary, may reach a point where all major sectors meet all the conditions for accession. In such situations the European Union will be forced to take a decision on the future accession of the state in question, losing its dominant position and even jeopardizing the economic benefits resulting from cooperation with it.

To this end, it is recommended that the concept of differentiated external integration should be only an intermediate stage between the moment when the accession negotiations have been opened and the moment when the state fulfills all the conditions

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23. World Bank Group, "Updated Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Assessment Released", 15 February, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/02/15/updated-ukraine-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-assessment-released>, last consulted on 18.09.2024.

for membership. This intermediate stage would significantly benefit the candidate state, as the integration of certain sectors could create a spillover effect, encouraging the involvement of additional sectors and thereby facilitating the implementation of reforms by the governments of those states.

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# THE WESTERN BALKANS



# Is Bosnia and Herzegovina “Russia’s Island” in Western Balkans?

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*Osman Sušić*

## Introduction

In this paper we will try to describe Russia’s interest and influence especially as a foreign malign influence in the Western Balkans, also in this paper we will explore historical bonds between Russia and Western Balkans countries, instruments and tools of Russian malign influence<sup>1</sup> and strategic Russian interest in Western Bal-

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1. Today the term “foreign malign influence” means any hostile effort undertaken by, at the direction of, or on behalf of or with the substantial support of, the government of a covered foreign country with the objective of influencing, through overt or covert means - [https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/50/3059#e\\_2](https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/50/3059#e_2).

kans, also we will explore key Russian political players in Western Balkans, and we will try to give answer on question is Bosnia and Herzegovina Russia's island in Western Balkans?

The Western Balkans region, a term used to refer to six countries in south-eastern Europe that are covered by EU enlargement policy (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia) the region is deeply polarized and post-conflict societies divided along ethnic, national, religious, and political lines, presents fertile ground for Russian and Chinese influence.<sup>2</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most vulnerable country in the region. Bosnia and Herzegovina's ranking represents the complicated political, social, and economic environment of the country – most importantly the deep divisions between Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the two constituent entities), that are fostering confusion over the country's strategic orientation.<sup>3</sup>

The Western Balkan countries have become a frontline in Russia's geopolitical confrontation with the West. Russian Federation has strong historical ties with the Western Balkans and holds a certain soft-power attraction for the region. The ongoing global crisis resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine has emphasized the importance of Western Balkan countries. However, it has also

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2. N. Džananović; D. Emini; A. Nenezić, *Foreign Malign Influence in the Western Balkans*, Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis", Skopje, 2023, p. 5.

3. *Russia's Footprint in the Western Balkan Information Environment (Summary)*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2009, p. 3, [https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/russias\\_footprint\\_in\\_wb\\_executive\\_summary\\_30-04\\_v2-2.pdf](https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/russias_footprint_in_wb_executive_summary_30-04_v2-2.pdf).

underscored internal vulnerabilities that stem from political, national, and social fragmentation. These weaknesses can be easily exploited to further divide the countries, especially those with Orthodox Christian and Slavic heritages that have maintained strong ties with Russia throughout history.<sup>4</sup> Since Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca<sup>5</sup> Russia in last 250 years with more or less success is trying to take control and expend her influence over the Western Balkans precisely playing on the card of Orthodox Christian and Slavic heritages. Russia's action was particularly expressed in 19<sup>th</sup> century and first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century through resolving Eastern question<sup>6</sup>, in that time at first Imperial Russia was sup-

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4. *Ibidem*, pp. 5 – 6.

5. Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, (July 10 [July 21, New Style], 1774), pact signed at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74 at Küçük Kaynarca, in Bulgaria, ending undisputed Ottoman control of the Black Sea and providing a diplomatic basis for future Russian intervention in internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The territorial provisions of the treaty extended the Russian frontier to the Southern Bug River, thus ceding to Russia the port of Azov, the fortresses of Kerch and Yenikale on the eastern end of the Crimean Peninsula, a part of the province of Kuban, and the estuary formed by the Dnieper and Bug rivers, including the Kinburn fortress. The territory of the Crimean khanate was to form an independent state, subject to the Ottoman sultan-caliph only in religious matters. Most far-reaching, however, was a religious stipulation that accorded to Russia the privilege of representing, within the Ottoman Empire, the Greek Orthodox Christians in Moldavia and Walachia (which were to be returned to Turkey) and in the Aegean Islands. Later, Russia freely interpreted and employed this provision to support its claims to a protectorate over the Greek Orthodox Christians anywhere in the Ottoman Empire. (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Kucuk-Kaynarca>).

6. Eastern Question, diplomatic problem posed in the 19th and early 20th centuries by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, centering on the contest

porting rebels against Ottoman Empire and later Christian principalities and states, Imperial Russia even entered in a I World War supporting Serbia. With outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution and the disappearance of the Russian Empire from the historical scene and in the next seventy years of existence of the Soviet Union, relations were cold and on the verge of conflict. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia formally recognized the Soviet Union in June 1940 and established diplomatic relations. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was one of the last European countries to do so. Relations between Soviet Union and Tito's Yugoslavia were even colder and on the verge of conflict especially after Tito – Stalin split in 1948.

To understand present-day Russian policy in the Western Balkans it is worth tracing its development over time. Since the early 1990s, Moscow's engagement in the Balkans has ebbed and flowed depending on the state of its relations with the West. Historic bonds and shared identity play a secondary role to strategic considerations. By the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which began almost simultaneously and under similar circumstances, Western Balkan become Russian sphere of interest.

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for control of former Ottoman territories. Any internal change in the Turkish domains caused tension among the European powers, each of which feared that one of the others might take advantage of the political disarray to increase its own influence. This question arose periodically during the 19th century—e.g., during the Greek revolution of the 1820s, in the Crimean conflict (1853–56), the Balkan crisis of 1875–78, the Bosnian crisis of 1908, and the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. The eventual distribution of the Ottoman territories was as follows: the Balkan provinces emerged in the course of the century as independent states, often under the influence of Russia or one of the other great powers. (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Eastern-Question>).

Cultural and historical ties give Russia considerable soft power, particularly among the Serbs population, concentrated mainly in Serbia, the Republika Srpska (one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Kosovo. In the Kosovo conflict, Russia condemned the NATO bombing of Serbia and firmly opposed Kosovo's independence. Russia uses its status as a permanent UN Security Council member in Serbia's favor. In 1994 and 2015, Moscow vetoed two UN Security Council resolutions condemning violence by Bosnian Serbs, the latter resolution qualifying the 1995 Srebrenica massacre as genocide,<sup>7</sup> also during the aggression and war against Bosnia and Herzegovina more than 700 Russian volunteers fought alongside the Army of Republika Srpska and 38 of them were killed. Authorities in entity Republika Srpska every year since 2019 is organizing Day of Russian Volunteers in city of Višegrad which Bosniak victims of the atrocities that took place in the eastern town say represents an insult to them. The 'Association of Women Victims of War' asked the BiH Prosecutor's Office to ban the celebration, and the institution said it formed a case regarding it. The Association said that the celebration represents an insult to them because the Russian volunteers were involved in the atrocities that were committed against Bosniaks in Višegrad.<sup>8</sup> We will mentioned leaders of the Russian volunteers

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7. European Parliament, *Russia and the Western Balkans Geopolitical Confrontation, Economic Influence and Political Interference*, 2023, p. 3, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747096/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)747096\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747096/EPRS_BRI(2023)747096_EN.pdf).

8. N1. *Controversial 'Day of Russian Volunteers' celebration takes place in Visegrad*, <https://n1info.ba/english/news/controversial-day-of-russian-volunteers-celebration-takes-place-in-visegrad/>, 12.04.2021); M. Obrenović, *Under Cossack Ban-*



during Bosnian war, Igor Girkin Strelkov, Viktor Zaplatin and Aleksandr Kravčenko, what the three of them have in common is that apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, they fought in Ukraine since 2014. Strelkov was a former officer for Russia's FSB security service and battlefield commander, he was key commander of Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region in 2014 and helped Russia annex Ukraine's Crimea that year and, soon after, to organize pro-Russian militias who wrested part of eastern Ukraine out of Kyiv's control – events that started the current conflict.<sup>9</sup> In November 2022, a court in the Netherlands sentenced Girkin and two other defendants to life in prison in absentia in the case of the 2014 shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 over Ukraine. All 298 people onboard died in the attack.<sup>10</sup> Zaplatin was the first deputy commander of the Luhansk People's Republic militia in 2014. In 2016 Zaplatin took part in the founding ceremony of the so-called Balkan Cossack Army / Union of Cossacks of the Balkans in the Montenegrin coastal town of Kotor, becoming its ataman, or supreme military commander.<sup>11</sup> Zaplatin is also recruiting a number of ethnic Serb volunteer

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*ner, Russian Ties with Balkan Fighters Strengthened*, BIRN Sarajevo, 16.10.2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/10/16/under-cossack-banner-russian-ties-with-balkan-fighters-strengthened/>.

9. Al Jazeera, *Russia jails nationalist critic Igor Girkin for four years over 'extremism'*, 25.01.2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/25/russia-jails-nationalist-critic-igor-girkin-for-four-years-over-extremism>.

10. Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, *Igor Girkin, Imprisoned Russian Nationalist, Plans to Join Troops Invading Ukraine*, 10.04.2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-girkin-strelkov-ukraine-invasion-prison/32899197.html>.

11. M. Obrenović, *op. cit.*

fighters who have travelled to Ukraine to fight since 2014. Reason why we mentioned these facts are that this is just one way how is Russia spreading foreign malign influence in the Western Balkans. Union of Cossacks of the Balkans The Union's main mission is to promote pro-Russian, conservative and Orthodox narratives and push back on the 'imposition' of western values, beside this proxy group we have two more, 'Night Wolves' biker group is one of Moscow's proactive proxy groups, with local chapters in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbian Honour / Srpska čast, another proxy, is a far-right group with links to organized crime active in Serbia and Republika Srpska and was allegedly established in the 'Russian-Serb Humanitarian Centre' in Niš which will we mention later in the text.

## **Russian influence toolkit**

Russia is using many different instruments to assert its interest. These include hard military power, as demonstrated in the interventions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria; the manipulation of economic ties; interference in other countries' domestic politics through various allies, affiliates, and proxies; and targeted information campaigns to influence public opinion. The Russian toolbox includes coercion, co-optation, and subversion. Coercion refers to the use of punishment, such as military force or economic sanctions or the threat thereof, to shape the behavior of other states.

Co-optation works through the extension of incentives to political and business elites and individuals in strategic positions aimed at creating relationships of dependence, which in turn provide Russia with advantage. Lastly, subversion is directed at society at large rather than at specific actors and is geared towards undermining adversaries rather than compelling another party to abide with Russian preferences.<sup>12</sup>

Russia has three objectives in the region, with varying degrees of intensity and success over time: first to preserve the status quo, where convenient for Russian interests (in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina), second undermine the EU and NATO, slowing down full integration into Western institutions; and, to a lesser extent, and third to protect Russia's economic interests (and those of its elites).

Russia has been exerting malign influence in the Western Balkans is through its support for separatist movements and its efforts to undermine the sovereignty of states in the region. More precisely, Russia has been supporting separatist movements in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina to undermine the stability of these countries and undermine Western presence. Additionally, with strategically organized disinformation campaigns they have induced political, national, and religious divisions to promote their interests in the region and stop them from potentially joining the EU and the NATO alliance. In March 2022. Russian Ambassador's

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12. D. Bechev, *Russia's strategic interests and tools of influence in the Western Balkans*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2019, p. 10, [https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/russias\\_strategic\\_interests\\_in\\_balkans\\_11dec.pdf](https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/russias_strategic_interests_in_balkans_11dec.pdf).

in Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Kalabukhov openly threat to Bosnia and Herzegovina, "If (Bosnia and Herzegovina) decides to be a member of any alliance that is an internal matter. Our response is a different matter. Ukraine's example shows what we expect. Should there be any threat, we will respond," Kalabukhov told the FTV entity broadcaster thus making a barely concealed threat. Kalabukhov said that it was the West that was actually posing a threat to Bosnia and Herzegovina's security by claiming that Russia "is allegedly preparing a plan." "We do not have any plans. We will respond having analyzed the strategic and geopolitical situation," the ambassador said, adding that BiH's membership in NATO was now not reality anyway because of the lack of consensus on the matter in the country, which was not likely to change that easily.<sup>13</sup> The main narrative spread is appealing to the far-right nationalist groups advocating that Western Balkans countries with strong historical ties with Russia, must return to traditional values within the wider Orthodox community, under Russian motherhood as protector of the faith. Another example of these malign activities can be detected in Montenegro. Such narratives present Montenegrins as a part of the Serbian nation, which is a negation of Montenegrin identity, culture, and history, which can be observed in reporting of media supporting this narrative.<sup>14</sup>

Russia is using hybrid strategies to pursue these objectives. Sputnik Srbija, the online news website in Serbian established

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13. N1 / HINA, *Russian ambassador: BiH can join NATO, but Moscow will react to threat*, 16.03.2022, <https://n1info.ba/english/news/russian-ambassador-bih-can-join-nato-but-moscow-will-react-to-threat/>.

14. N. Džananović; D. Emini; A. Nenezić, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

under the umbrella of the Russian state news agency Sputnik (now under EU sanctions), has been recognized as one of the main channels of Russian influence in the Western Balkans media space over the years. It has the potential to reach audiences that speak Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian, and its content is very often republished by local media, which find it convenient to use the well-written and free-of-charge articles offered by Sputnik Srbija to feed information voids. An analysis of the narratives promoted by Sputnik Srbija has identified patterns corresponding with the foreign policy objectives listed above. These include reputational attacks against the EU and NATO, the undermining of pro-Western governments in the region, and the fueling of feelings of governmental weakness and regional instability among the population, portraying any change in the status quo as a deliberate operation by hostile forces to ignite a new regional conflict. Along the same lines, in November 2022 the media group Russia Today (RT), also state-controlled and under EU sanctions, launched a multimedia website in the Serbian language, dubbed RT Balkan; television broadcasting is expected to begin in 2024.

Beyond the media, the Serbian Orthodox Church has also been identified as a powerful vehicle of influence for Russia in the region. Slavic brotherhood and shared Orthodox Christianity values are used to fortify the Kremlin's ties with political leaders, churches and independent groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina (entity Republika Srpska), North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and among Orthodox minority groups in non-Christian countries, such as Albania and Kosovo. First, the Serbian Orthodox Church

replicates a large part of the Russian narratives presented above, thereby not only spreading conservative values but also political viewpoints of partnership between Russia and the three countries. It 'provides religious legitimacy to domestic and foreign state policies' in Serbia, but also promotes Serb nationalism and anti-Western agendas in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Second, Russia actively amplifies church rifts in the region to sow division and destabilize societies at large for example problem in Montenegro with Montenegrin Orthodox Church which is not recognized by the Patriarch of Constantinople or the Russian Orthodox Church. Third, the Serbian Orthodox Church supports nationalist and far-right groups and individuals who often advocate for closer ties with Russia The Church is giving tacit support to Milorad Dodik's secessionist agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Patriarch Porfirije himself taking part prominently in the banned 9 January entity Republika Srpska victory parade in 2022<sup>15</sup>, and fourth Oligarchs with ties to the Russian Orthodox Church and far-right elements of Russian society, such as Konstantin Malofeev, actively contribute to Russian soft power efforts in the Balkans. Through his St Basil the Great Charitable Foundation, the largest Orthodox charity in Russia with a reported budget of US\$40 million, his media outlet, Tsargrad TV, and conservative think-tank Katehon, Malofeev has supported family

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15. W. Zweers; N. Drost; B. Henry, *Little substance, considerable impact Russian influence in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2023, pp. 14-15. <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/little-substance-considerable-impact.pdf>.

values campaigns, promoted pan-Slavic views, pushed a variety of conspiracy theories against Western-friendly politicians in the region, and published articles justifying Russia's 'civilizational role' in the Balkans. The Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre in Niš, registered as a non-profit organization, is also seen as a powerful tool for influence in the region, and has been seen by Western officials as a potential base for covert operations for Russia. Among other activities, it organizes youth educational camps in Russia and Serbia, denounced by some researchers as indoctrination and radicalization centers. Its connections with radical nationalist groupings, such as Serbian Honor and St George of Lončari have also been exposed as part of the Russian destabilization toolkit.<sup>16</sup>

Russian influence became highly visible after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. While all Western Balkan countries, including Serbia, have supported UN resolutions condemning Russia's aggression, their positioning on EU sanctions has been less homogenous. Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia promptly joined the EU's sanctions regime against Russia, while Montenegro adopted them in April 2022.. The Serbian government adopted conclusions in which it voiced support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine but refrained from applying the EU sanctions, as did Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serb member of Bosnia and Herzegovina's collective presidency and in that time current chair Željka Cvijanović said in February 2023 that she would 'vehemently oppose any change in the relations with Russia'. Russia remains

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16. European Parliament, *Russia and the Western Balkans. Geopolitical Confrontation, Economic Influence and Political Interference*, 2023, p. 5.

Serbia's biggest arms supplier but is in increasing competition with China. Serbia's refusal to impose sanctions on its ally Russia is among obstacles to a speedier European Union accession bid, said in that time Serb Prime Minister Ana Brnabić on 10 February 2023, describing the move as the 'condition above all conditions' set by the European Union.<sup>17</sup> Vast support for the Russian aggression against Ukraine is visible if you are traveling through Serbia and entity Republika Srpska you can see Russian flags, graffiti, murals, billboards with messages of support to the Russian aggression against Ukraine (Putin's pictures, letter Z, Serbs and Russians are brothers, etc.) Russia also uses cyber-attacks to destabilize the Balkans. Most attacked were reported in Montenegro, according to the Global Cybersecurity Index Bosnia and Herzegovina has the lowest score of cyber security<sup>18</sup>.

Beside these tools for spreading Russian interest in Western Balkans region, it is important to emphasize Russian energy policy. The starting points of contemporary Russian energy policy are defined in the document: "The Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2020", adopted in 2003.<sup>19</sup> Russia managed to took control over the energy sector in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina is almost 100% dependent on Russian gas and importing gas only from Russia. It should, be

17. *Ibidem*, p. 6.

18. International Telecommunication Union, *Global Cybersecurity Index 2024*, 5th Edition, 2024, p. 25, [https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Documents/GCIv5/2401416\\_1b\\_Global-Cybersecurity-Index-E.pdf](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Documents/GCIv5/2401416_1b_Global-Cybersecurity-Index-E.pdf).

19. M. Simurdić, *Russian Energy Policy and the Balkans*, 2009, p. 2, <https://www.isac-fund.org/download/06eMilan%20Simurdic%20%20Russian%20Energy%20Policy%20and%20the%20Balkans.pdf>.



noted that the share of gas in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia energy mix remains low. In Bosnia and Herzegovina for example, gas constitutes only 3.3% of the country total energy mix.<sup>20</sup> In February 2007 for 236 million KM to the Russian company Neft-GazinKor, which is 40 percent owned by Zarubezhneft<sup>21</sup>, bought only two Oil refineries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Oil refineries in Bosanski Brod and Modriča and distribution company Petrol<sup>22</sup>. In 2008 Gazprom bought NIS (Oil industry of Serbia). Gazprom acquired a 51 per cent stake in NIS for 400 million euros in 2008, as well as a 51 percent share in a local company that is in charge of both construction and management of the South Stream pipeline through Serbia. The Russian firm also upgraded NIS's Pančevo refinery as part of the deal. Critics claim that the controlling interest sold to Gazprom Neft was sold too cheaply at 400 million euros when NIS had capital assets valued at 993.8 million euros. Also, at the time, a Deloitte accounting assessment estimated the "fair market value" of NIS as 2.2 billion euros, meaning the value of the 51 per cent controlling interest would be computed at 1.12 billion euros.<sup>23</sup> Gazprom represents the embodiment of the Russian

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20. W. Zweers; N. Drost; B. Henry, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

21. Zarubezhneft is a 100% state-owned Russian oil and gas company, the company operates in the Downstream segment in the Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), has its own design institutes for subsurface and surface development of oil and gas fields, as well as service companies.

22. ŽURNAL INFO, *Looting of the petroleum industry of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2): Secret privatization and operations of the Refineries Brod and Modriča*, 18.09.2020, <https://zurnal.info/clanak/secret-privatization-and-operations-of-the-refineries-brod-and-modrica-/23393>.

23. Radio Slobodna Evropa, *Serbian Oil and Gas Privatization: Investigation Promised*, 19.08.2024, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/serbia-oil-and-gas-privatiza->

foreign energy policy. It is a company whose majority shareholder is the state. It came into being from the Soviet Ministry for Gas and, basically, it was conceived to unite systems for the exploitation and transportation of gas in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. It controls around 80 percent of Russian gas reserves and the entire gas infrastructure, transport and transit gas networks. Although there are no disputes over the assessment that Gazprom's intention is to control the entire gas pipeline from the source, through transit to the buyers in foreign markets, opinions differ about the background of such a policy. According to some, Gazprom has not given up its intention to control the gas distribution system, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. He, who controls the pipeline, controls the buyer.<sup>24</sup>

When we are speaking about Foreign direct investments for BH in 2023, in terms of geographic origin, the largest inflow of investments during 2023 was recorded from Russia (KM 376.3 million), Serbia (KM 355.6 million), and from the Netherlands (KM 237.7 million). Observed by activities, the most investments were realized in the field of production of coke and refined petroleum products in the amount of KM 362.4 million, then in the field of financial services in the amount of KM 304.3 million, and in the field of telecommunications KM 288.9 million.<sup>25</sup>

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*tion-investigation-promised/26539837.html*; M. Stojanović, *Serbia Mulls 'Taking Over' Mainly Russian-owned Oil Company*, BIRN Belgrade, 14.07.2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/07/14/serbia-mulls-taking-over-mainly-russian-owned-oil-company/>.

24. M. Simurdić, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

25. Centralna Banka Bosne i Hercegovine / Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Foreign direct investments for BH in 2023 amounted to KM 1.89 billion*,

## Russian key political players in Western Balkans

Serbia and the regime of Aleksandar Vučić are important Russian partner and among the key Russian political players in Western Balkans but Entity Republika Srpska and her political leader Milorad Dodik are a crucial element of Russia's policy covering the entire "Serbosphere" in former Yugoslavia (or "Srpski Svet"—Serbian world, a concept inspired by that of a "Russian world" or *Ruskii Mir*). From the most time of his reign, Dodik started threatening the Western overseers of the Dayton peace framework with an independence referendum in the Republika Srpska entity. In 2016, Dodik organized a plebiscite to declare January 9—the date Bosnian Serbs established their "state" in Bosnia back in 1992—the "Dan Republike Srpske / Day of RS." The move, struck down by the BiH Constitutional Court as violating the basic law, was a dry run for a full-blown secession vote.

Russia has in the past directly financed Dodik's elections campaigns and, according to an expert, the country is the prime investor in RS, although that does not appear in official statistics.<sup>45</sup> Apart from Dodik, other politicians in entity Republika Srpska, for example Nenad Stevandić president of the United Srpska (US) party and president of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska, is also regarded as pro-Russian politician

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has once again laid bare the close ties between the Bosnian Serb leadership and Russia.

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19.08.2024. <https://cbbh.ba/press/ShowNews/1597?lang=en>.

In contrast to the other political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dodik argued that BiH should stay neutral in the war. However, as the fighting progressed, he opted for open support for Putin's "special military operation." Visiting Moscow in September 2022, the Serb leader argued that Russia was defending its co-ethnics, saying: "For many years, the West did not react to the extermination of the Russian population in Ukraine, there were daily murders and bombings in Donbas." Dodik pledged that BiH would not align with Western sanctions. On January 9, 2023 (RS Day), he awarded Putin the entity's highest medal for "his patriotic concern and love for Republika Srpska." (In 2024, the same medal went to Viktor Orbán.) The move drew heavy criticism from both the EU and United States. Dodik's behavior goes beyond that of Serbia, which has similarly refused to cut political and economic ties to Moscow yet steered clear of more provocative actions vis-à-vis the West.<sup>26</sup>

Dodik is working hard to build a personal relationship with Putin. The two held talks in September 2022 (ahead of the Bosnian elections), their seventh summit since 2014. That was followed by visits in May 2023, February 2024, and June 2024. In effect, Dodik was for long time only political leader in Europe who met Putin, later Hungarian Prime minister Orban met Putin. Dodik has been taking advantage of Russia's relative isolation by the West in the aftermath of the invasion.

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26. D. Bechev, *Between the EU and Moscow: How Russia Exploits Divisions in Bosnia*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/06/bosnia-between-russia-eu?lang=en>.

Russia is trying to present itself as the principal external patron of entity Republika Srpska. At the same time, the link to Putin and the support Dodik receives in his standoff with the OHR and the West are essential for maintaining his leading position in Bosnian Serb politics. Being the Balkan politician of choice for the Kremlin furthermore empowers him to claim the mantle of a potential leader of all Serbs throughout the Balkans. That includes those in Montenegro and in northern Kosovo, as well as radical nationalists in Serbia itself who are critical of Vučić's involvement in EU-supported dialogue with Pristina aimed at a final settlement of the dispute.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, Russia has also opened channels to the Bosnian Croats in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, political forces like the Bosnian-Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) of Dragan Čović sometimes act in the Russian interest, for example when Čović and his fellow HDZ deputies voted against aligning with EU sanctions towards Russia in BiH's House of Peoples upper chamber of the BiH state-level parliament.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, on 23 June 2023 the US Embassy in BiH criticized Čović for obstructing the Southern Interconnection natural gas pipeline, which would reduce BiH dependence on Russian gas, declaring that 'BiH is at energy crossroads, and HDZ BiH is blocking the path to European integration and energy security.'<sup>29</sup> Čović has a history of cooperating with the

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27. *Ibidem*.

28. INDEXHR, Čović glasao protiv uvođenja sankcija Rusiji, HDZ BiH ih odbio podržati, 24.03.2024, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/covic-glasao-protiv-uvodjenja-sankcija-rusiji-hdz-bih-ih-odbio-podrzati/2350308.aspx>.

29. U. S. Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *BiH is missing its chance to end dependence on Russian gas, create jobs, and grow its economy*, 24.06.2023, <https://>

Russians. In 2019, Ambassador Pyotr Ivantsov backed the Croats' call for an overhaul of electoral rules. Čović has been cozying up to both Dodik and Vučić, Russia's main Balkan partners.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

As we mentioned earlier in the text Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most vulnerable country in the Western. Bosnia and Herzegovina's ranking represents the complicated political, social, and economic environment of the country – most importantly the deep divisions between Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the two constituent entities), that are fostering confusion over the country's strategic orientation

Bosnia and Herzegovina's status as a potential "Russia's island" in the Western Balkans is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, geopolitical, and strategic factors. Russia's involvement in the region is not a recent phenomenon but rather rooted in centuries-old ties dating back to the imperial era, during which Russia positioned itself as a protector of Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans. These historical connections, coupled with religious and cultural affinities, particularly in Republika Srpska, have been skillfully leveraged by Russia as part of its broader strategy to

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*ba.usembassy.gov/bih-is-missing-its-chance-to-end-dependence-on-russian-gas/*.

30. D. Bechev, *op. cit.*

assert influence over the region and to maintain a foothold in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The term “Russia’s island” reflects the potential for Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially through Republika Srpska, to act as a gateway for Russian geopolitical influence in the Western Balkans. Russia’s strategic interests in this region are multifaceted. It seeks to preserve the status quo in areas like Bosnia and Kosovo where instability benefits its aims, to undermine Euro-Atlantic integration, and to use economic and energy policies to further its influence. Russia’s malign influence is evident in its support for separatist movements, promotion of anti-Western sentiment, and backing of far-right nationalist groups. Through hybrid tactics—including media manipulation, disinformation campaigns, and the soft power of the Orthodox Church—Russia has attempted to deepen political and ethnic divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly targeting the already fragmented political landscape.

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s internal vulnerabilities have provided fertile ground for Russia’s efforts. The stark divisions between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, as well as the lack of a unified stance on issues like NATO and EU integration, offer Russia opportunities to exert influence. Through political allies such as Milorad Dodik, Russia has managed to maintain significant sway over the political discourse in Republika Srpska, while also attempting to reach out to Bosnian Croat political forces. This manipulation of internal divisions serves Russia’s broader goal of preventing the consolidation of Western influence in the region.

Moreover, Russia's influence is bolstered by its significant role in Bosnia and Herzegovina's energy sector and its status as a key investor, particularly in Republika Srpska. Control over strategic assets like gas pipelines and refineries provides Russia with both economic leverage and political influence. This economic presence, combined with political backing for leaders like Dodik, reinforces Russia's position in the country, helping to create conditions where Bosnia and Herzegovina could potentially act as a pro-Russian outpost in the Western Balkans.

However, Bosnia and Herzegovina's future is not entirely aligned with Russia. The country's aspirations for EU and NATO membership, particularly within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, create a counterbalance to Russian influence. The ongoing war in Ukraine has further complicated this dynamic, as Western powers have refocused their attention on containing Russian aggression and countering its influence in strategically vulnerable regions like the Western Balkans. While Russia has thus far been successful in exploiting Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal divisions, Western efforts to strengthen the country's institutions and promote greater integration with Euro-Atlantic structures remain a significant obstacle to Russia's long-term objectives.

Therefore, while Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently susceptible to Russian influence, particularly in Republika Srpska, its future as "Russia's island" is not predetermined. The country stands at a geopolitical crossroads, with pressures from Russia. The direction Bosnia and Herzegovina ultimately takes will depend not only on internal political decisions but also on the broader



geopolitical context and the ability of Western actors to counter Russian influence effectively.

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# **Bosnia's Road to EU Integration: The Constitution of B&H between two Conflicting Narratives; Man as a Member of Ethnic Group vs. Man as a Citizen**

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*Berina Beširović*

## **Introduction**

Negotiations to end the four-year aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina were conducted from 1st to 21st November 1995 at the air base near Dayton (United States of America). Under the auspices of the USA, the European Union and with the participation

of the Contact Group<sup>1</sup>, the terms of the General framework agreement for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (aka. Dayton Peace Agreement, Dayton Agreement) were adopted. It was signed on December 14, 1995, in Paris and has 11 Annexes, of which Annex 4 is also the state Constitution, thus the main subject of analyses in this paper.<sup>2</sup> Three delegations took part in the negotiations: the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina headed by the President of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, the Delegation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia led by Slobodan Milošević<sup>3</sup> and the Delegation of the Republic of Croatia led by Franjo Tuđman, all with mediation by, primarily, Richard Holbrooke, US special negotiator for Bosnia and Herzegovina and US Deputy Secretary of State, and Warren Christopher, US Secretary of State during the term of President Bill Clinton.<sup>4</sup> As we can see, the entire negotiation process was under the strict

1. The contact group was mentioned for the first time on April 25, 1994, as a four-member body, with the task of coordinating political action that would lead to the end of the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. The very next day, on April 26, 1994, the five-member group took on its definitive form. It was made up of representatives of five, perhaps, the most powerful countries in the world. On behalf of the USA Redman, on behalf of Germany Steiner, on behalf of Britain Manning, on behalf of France Marseille and on behalf of Russia Nikiforov (Kurtćehajić, 2017, p. 310).
2. Suad Kurtćehajić, *Prilozi za politički sistem Bosne i Hercegovine*, Futur art, Sarajevo, 2017, p. 274.
3. Who was at the same time also the head of mixed delegation from Bosnia-Herzegovina representing Serbs Republic together with three Serbs from Bosnia and three Serbs from Serbia. His votes were double the value at the negotiations.
4. Omer Ibrahimagić, *Politički sistem Bosne i Hercegovine*, izdavač "autor", Sarajevo, 2008, p. 79.

supervision of the international community, through strict supervision of the United States of America and Europe. It is important to keep in mind that not all three delegations participating in the negotiations were homogeneous, and by this we mean the difficult work of the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was the only ethnically diverse one, with a dual role. On the one hand it acted as a contracting party before the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signing documents together with the delegation from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia, and on the other hand, when signing certain annexes, it acted only as a delegation from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>5</sup> In the past 29 years, the situation on the ground has shown that the ruling elites aim to mold the interpretation of the Dayton Agreement into ideological patterns and interests that prevail in narratives about ethnic conflict and through such interpretations mobilize the public and their voters. Unfortunately, due to such practice, one gets the impression that the interpreters of the Dayton Agreement are political elites. This paper shows how current constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is prioritizing man as a member of ethnic group thus being discriminatory and against primary democratic values of Europe and EU.

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5. Suad Kurtćehajić, *Prilozi za politički sistem Bosne i Hercegovine*, Futur art, Sarajevo, 2017, p. 320.

## **Nature of Dayton Peace Agreement and Concept of ethno-nationalism**

### **The Dayton Peace Agreement**

Speaking about the conduct of the negotiations in Dayton, it was the result of the overall peace negotiation process for B&H, which was conducted in the period from February 1992 to December 1995.<sup>6</sup> Certain elements of the previous plans for B&H, of which there were six in total, became an integral part of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Of those six, the most important is the Washington Agreement, which became a key element of the Dayton Agreement and ceased to be valid as an independent plan. With this plan, from March 18, 1994, one of the entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, today's Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was formed in a political-territorial sense, as a way of reconciling Croatian and Bosnian Muslims' interests and ending the conflict on that front. This model of the Federation of B&H was later incorporated into the Dayton Peace Agreement with the political and legal status of one of the two territorial entities and is also the first result of American involvement in peace negotiations. It was evident that all the previous initiatives of European countries were failing. American involvement brought results, but at the same time it posed a challenge to Europe, as it emphasized American domi-

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6. Radimir Nešković, *Nedovršena država: Politički sistem Bosne i Hercegovine*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Sarajevo, 2017, p. 117.

nance in international politics. The first concrete result of American involvement is the forementioned Washington Agreement, i.e. the creation of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed by Izetbegović, Tuđman, Silajdžić and Zubak, in the presence of US President Bill Clinton and other US officials.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the Military Agreement signed in Split on March 12, 1994, was also part of the Washington Agreement.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the adoption of this agreement was preceded by a fierce war between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, with the support of around 30,000 soldiers of the Croatian army<sup>9</sup> Bosnia was faced with a double aggression, which led to the consideration of international sanctions against Croatia if it did not withdraw its military units from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In those circumstances, the Clinton administration exerted strong pressure on Croatian politics and President Tuđman. The Americans took over the management of the Bosnian problem from the Europeans and set clear goals: permanent peace after a sixty-day ceasefire and an agreement for an internationally recognized multi-ethnic state. Key elements of the agreement included a framework for the organization of the country, elections, a three-member presidency, parliament, freedom of movement and return of refugees, cooperation with the international war

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7. Marko A. Hoare, *The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

8. Ivan Bandić, "Washingtonski sporazum - spas ili propast za Hrvate u Bosni i Hercegovini?", *Međunarodne studije*, 2001, Vol. 1 issue 2-3, p. 159.

9. Mustafa Imamović, *Historija države i prava Bosne i Hercegovine*, Magistrat, Sarajevo, 2014.



crimes court and international police forces, and the determination of Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal borders. To summarize short-term results of Dayton Peace Agreement, we will focus on its successes at the time. Firstly, The Dayton Peace Agreement effectively ended the conflict and created peace. Secondly, this Agreement confirmed Bosnia's independence and sovereignty, but at the same time changed pre-war internal structure of Bosnia. As a result of this Treaty, it is consisted of two entities (Federation of B&H and Republic of Srpska) and one municipal District (District Brčko)<sup>10</sup>. Two entities administrative lines were based on military power-sharing as direct spoils of war and result of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Bosnian Muslims. At the same time, those administrative lines are ethnically based as entity of Republic of Srpska is with Serbs majority, while Croats and Bosnian Muslims live dominantly in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In terms

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10. Parties at conflict could not find agreement about status of Brčko, weather it would be part of entity of Federation of B&H or entity of Republic of Srpska, at the Dayton. Parties thus agreed to forward the issue to international arbitration which on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999, decided that it shall have special status of District. It is important to emphasize that with Amendment I to the Constitution of B&H, which is also the first and only adopted Amendment to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina ever, the Brčko District received the final legal status in the constitutional and legal order after the Amendment was adopted at the sessions of both houses of the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 (Amendment I to the Constitution of B&H, "Official Gazette of B&H", No. 25/09). In the Constitution, Brčko has the status of the District of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is under the jurisdiction of the institutions of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the common territorial property of the entities but belongs to the local self-government unit (Article VI Paragraph 4 of Annex 4, "Official Gazette of B&H", No. 25/09).

of legality, status and decision-making they have equal status by the Constitution (Anex 4 of the treaty).

We find it crucial to outline how Anex 4 (Constitution) of Dayton Peace Agreement also includes European Convention of Human Rights and all its Protocols as integral part of the Constitution. Namely, Protocol 1 to Annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement refers to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and confirms that the Convention will be applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This means that the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina will have access to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to protect their rights if they feel they have been violated. Protocol 12 to Annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement refers to the prohibition of discrimination. This protocol prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms recognized in national legislation. This protocol additionally protects citizens from discrimination based on any characteristic, such as race, sex, skin color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property status, birth or other characteristics. Respecting this European Convention is vital for democratic and European values affecting the EU-Bosnia relations in terms of membership.

## **Peacebuilding based on ethno-nationalism**

The ethnic concept of the nation assumes that whether you leave your community or immigrate to another, you inevitably and

organically remain a member of the community of your birth or ancestry.<sup>11</sup> This is why ethnic conflicts are one of the most common causes of war or secession. There is also the concept of an ethnic state in theory, which emphasizes the ethnic in the nation-state. We recognize the ethnic state by the aspiration to be territorially rounded as an ethnically pure whole and most simply understood as the aspiration that the borders of the nation states, to the extent possible, coincide with the distribution of different ethnic groups. This understanding of nation-states also shaped the policy of neighbouring countries towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. We can see it in the examples of the Cvetković-Maček Agreement from 1939, the Tuđman-Milošević agreement in Karadžorđevo from 1991, and other agreements where the division of Bosnia was planned according to ethnic principles in favour of creation of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia.

While the problem of ethnic conflict and the inevitable violation of human rights, minority rights and dependence on humanitarian and military interventions, i.e. the international community, are the most frequently encountered in the literature, criticism of the ethnic state is based on several other theses as well. Beck and Habermas are one of the theorists who criticized this understanding of nation/ethnicity in their essays. Ulrich Beck was generally critical of traditional nationalism and ethnic identity, so his view of ethnic states was based on his general views on nationalism and global change. Beck advocated the idea of cosmopolitanism,

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11. Esad Zgodić, *Bosanski rukopis Omera Ibrahimagića*, Promocult, Sarajevo, 2005, p. 294.

where people identify more with the global community than with ethnic or national groups.<sup>12</sup> He believed that ethnic states, which are based on ethnic identities, are increasingly incompatible with the modern globalized world and can create tensions and conflicts.<sup>13</sup> Jurgen Habermas can also be considered a critic of ethnic states and nationalism as an ideology. His theory of “discursive ethos” emphasizes the importance of rational and inclusive public debate as a basic element of democracy.<sup>14</sup> He believes that political decisions should be made through argumentation and exchange of ideas, and not based on ethnic or nationalistic grounds. Habermas’s critical attitude towards nationalism and ethnic states reflects his general commitment to cosmopolitanism and the idea of “post-national” or “transnational” identity. In his view, societies should strive for openness, mutual understanding and cooperation on a global scale, instead of being based on a narrow ethnic or national identity that can create tension and conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Bosnia is a post-conflict country under reconstruction and an example of a political system based on the ethnic division of power. To understand the conflicts that arise, shape and pervade ethnically divided societies, we will refer to the book “Politics of Regulating Ethnic Conflict” by John McGarry and Brendan

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12. Ulrich Beck, “The Cosmopolitan State: Redefining Power in the Global Age”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 2005, 18, pp. 143–159, DOI 10.1007/s10767-006-9001-1.

13. *Ibidem*.

14. Ted Fleming, *Habermas, Critical Theory and Education*, Conference paper at Pedagogical Institute, University of Gdansk, 2012, p. 7.

15. *Ibidem*.

O'Leary from 1993, in which they analysed the mechanisms of ethnic conflict resolution. This book is relevant to us because, among other things, the authors explained from empirical sources how ethnic differences are eliminated (through ethnic conflict) and how ethnic conflict is managed as such. Gradation of methods for eliminating ethnic differences is graded from the most radical to the least radical with the fewest human casualties. In this sense, methods such as genocide, forced resettlement, secession and assimilation are strategies for abolishing ethnic differences, while strategies aimed at managing ethnic differences include control, arbitration, federalism and consociationalism.<sup>16</sup> Ethnic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina unfortunately has the experience of genocide against Bosnian Muslims and forced relocation of the population with aim of creating ethnically pure territories. Also, one of the reasons for the failure of federalism as a solution to ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and in particular the reason for the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, was the ethnically unevenly dispersed population and the impossibility of exercising the right to self-determination to the detriment of Bosnian borders. To prevent ethnic conflicts, political relations between ethnic communities can be organized according to the principles of power sharing. These principles can be applied at the level of the entire country or within regions characterized by ethnic conflicts and apply to both central and local governments. They are based on the acceptance of ethnic pluralism, with the

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16. J. McGarry; B. O'Leary, *Politics of Regulating Ethnic Conflict*, Routledge, London, 1993.

aim of ensuring rights, freedoms and development opportunities for all ethnic groups, and creating political and social institutions that guarantee their equality. Consociationalism agreements are positive because they include the self-government of the relevant ethnic communities. However, to be effective, consociationalism models require the fulfilment of three key conditions:

- ✓ Rival ethnic groups must give up the rapid integration or assimilation of another ethnic group into their nation and give up the creation of their own nation-state.
- ✓ Political leaders of different ethnic communities must be motivated to resolve conflicts and preserve the peace.
- ✓ Political leaders of ethnic communities must have a certain political autonomy to achieve their interests.

To conclude, the structure of the current government (after the experiences of secession, genocide and ethnic cleansing) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is imbued with elements of cantonization, federalism and consociationalism. However, the factual application of those models in B&H is specific in relation to the traditional understanding and applied in a completely different context than in other multi-ethnic states of Europe. The government structure is divided into two entities that we cannot formally consider federal units or federal states, but with the way of functioning and decentralization as is known in other federal states and the division of one of those two entities into cantons, all with an emphasis on the ethnic structure of the population as a measure of demarcation.

## **Constitutional discrimination: Limitations and possibilities of full integration of B&H in EU**

### **Aspirations for membership in EU**

One of the main strategic goals of Bosnia and Herzegovina is full membership in the European Union, according to B&H Presidency report for 2023. Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a signatory to the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union, applied for membership in the European Union and answered the European Commission's Questionnaire.<sup>17</sup> Several key turning points in the chronology of relations between Bosnia-Herzegovina and the EU took place during the 2022-2024 period. Namely, Bosnia and Herzegovina received candidate status in the European Union on December 15, 2022, and accession negotiations between Bosnia-Herzegovina and the EU opened in March 2024. In this regard, we will refer at the most important obligations that B&H undertook by accepting documents and agreements from the chronology of its relationship with the EU. As a reminder, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the SAA on June 16, 2008, and the Council of the European Union only adopted the Decision on the conclusion of this Agreement on April 21, 2015, which then entered into force on June 1, 2015.<sup>18</sup> In this interim pe-

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17. Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018-2023.

18. Parliamentary Assembly BiH: Overview of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, 2015.

riod from 2008 until the entry into force of the SAA, the so-called Interim agreement on trade and trade issues between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina was in power. With the entry into force of the SAA, which is contained in ten chapters through 135 articles of the Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to membership in the European Union with the obligation to fulfil all criteria as prerequisites for that membership.

When we talk about the key obligations that Bosnia-Herzegovina has towards the European Union (in terms of prospective membership), the most important priorities are contained in 14 key points that the European Commission adopted in May 2019.<sup>19</sup> At the time when the priorities were defined five years ago, they represented the minimum obligations that B&H must fulfil in the process of harmonizing its legislation with the European Union, so that the Commission could make a positive assessment, that is, give consent for the opening of negotiations with the European Union. Today, the perspective is somewhat different, i.e. although B&H did not fulfil these 14 key priorities, it received the green light for opening negotiations with the European Union on March 21, 2024.<sup>20</sup> European Commission compiles and sends a Report in which it evaluates the progress of B&H to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions annually. Bosnia's obligation to fulfil 14 key priorities, and the responsibility towards

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19. European Commission, 2019; Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina Herzegovina.

20. Directorate for European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2024.



the European Union is contained in six clusters that contain a total of 33 chapters. In following chapters, we will focus on the obligation to align domestic law with international law, EU *acquis* and European Convention for Human Rights. As a matter of fact, national Constitution is not in line with European Convention for Human Rights and Basic Freedoms, while at the same time carrying essential inconsistencies in regards of political decision making and universal democratic values. On December 14, 2010, the Council of the European Union put the implementation of the *Sejdić-Finci* judgment against Bosnia and Herzegovina on the list of things that the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina should implement. European Council entailed how B&H must harmonize its constitutional framework with the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights. It emphasized the importance of improving and strengthening the efficiency of the state and institutions, including the necessary constitutional changes. For example, On February 17, 2014, the European Union Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle visited Sarajevo in a continuous effort to help national leaders to find the solution necessary for the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the EU. But even that meeting failed to reach an agreement to implement the verdict. *"The implementation of the Sejdić-Finci verdict is not a non-existent problem. This is B&H's international obligation, which is now crucial for B&H's progress on the European path,"* Füle said at the time.<sup>21</sup> Due to above mentioned Constitutional inconsistencies it is estimated that around 400,000 citizens, or 12 percent of the population,

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21. Slobodna Evropa.

cannot run for the position of president or member of parliament because of their ethnicity or place of residence.

### **Constitutional limitations: Constitutional reform is inevitable**

#### **Elections for the Parliamentary Assembly**

Firstly, Bosniak and Croat delegates to the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina are elected by Bosniak and Croat delegates to the House of Peoples of the Federation B&H. Serbian delegates are elected by the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska. The quorum of the House of Peoples consists of nine members, with at least three Bosniak, three Croat and three Serb delegates present. From the provisions, the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina are divided into entities as electoral units, so Bosniaks and Croats from Republic of Srpska (RS) are denied the chance to run for the House of Peoples. That right is also denied to Serbs from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) when it comes to the election of Serbian representatives to the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly. Additionally, citizens from minority groups have no possibility to run for the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, they have no representatives at all. According to the data of the Federal Bureau of Statistics from 2017, in which the final results of the last population census in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2013 were published, for the FB&H, 3.59% of the members of Others live in that entity, and

according to the final results of the census for the RS, published by the Republic Institute of Statistics of Republic of Srpska, 1.25% of the members of Others live there. It means that about 5% of the population is not at all involved in decision-making processes at the state level. This is contrary to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, violating the political right of citizens to elect and be elected.

### **The method of decision-making in the Parliamentary Assembly**

In addition to the fact that the method of election for the Parliamentary Assembly is based on a serious violation of international law on the prohibition of discrimination, the key structural error in the Constitution of B&H is the very method of decision-making in the Parliamentary Assembly. Decisions of both houses are made by the majority of those who are present and vote, and it is stipulated in the Constitution that the delegates will make the greatest efforts to ensure that the necessary majority is at least one-third of the votes of the members in the House of Representatives from the territory of each entity (that is, five members in the case of the Serbian entity, ten in the case of territory of the Federation), and one third of the votes of the delegates of the House of Peoples, also from the territory of each entity (two delegates in the case of the Serbian entity, four delegates in the case of delegates from the Federation). If agreement is not reached, the decision will be made by a majority vote of those present and voting, if two-thirds or more of the delegates or members elected from each entity do not oppose

it. This means that twenty or more delegates from the territory of the FB&H and ten or more delegates from the territory of the RS, represent the so-called “entity majority”.<sup>22</sup> “Entity majority” as a category directly conditions the complete decision-making process in the Parliamentary Assembly to “entity voting”, i.e. deciding in the Parliamentary Assembly depends on the will of the entity, and not on the will of the delegates. This model creates a vicious circle of dysfunctionality. In its November 2023 Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Commission assessed progress in reforming national institutions. Entity voting is still understood as one of the key reasons for the dysfunctionality of institutions, which entails a lack of progress in the context of reform in the legislative body and especially in the process of harmonizing the work of the legislative body (and other political bodies) with the EU legislation. The key objection to the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is that both chambers prefer ethnic division of power at the expense of citizens and democracy, so entity or ethnic conditionality during voting is what essentially defines a quorum. Thus, in the House of Peoples, which has 15 delegates, the quorum is 9, with the fact that, paradoxically, 12 delegates can be present without a quorum being reached. The reason for this is that the House of Peoples can decide only if the ethnic census is satisfied, i.e. the presence of 3 delegates from all three constitutive peoples. Hypothetically, 5 Bosniaks, 5 Croats and 2 Serbs cannot decide even though a quorum has been reached in a quantitative sense. This directly means that it is enough for delegates from one

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22. Article IV, paragraph 3., of Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

constitutive people to just boycott the work of the House by not attending the sessions and although there is a majority to decide, there is no ethnic will.

### **Electing members and decision-making in B&H Presidency**

Primarily, a member of the three-membered Presidency cannot be a minority. Only a citizen declaring as one of three constituent peoples can be elected as a member of Presidency while at the same time, out of three members each must be elected from different group of three constituent peoples. In this way, minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were discriminated against based on ethnicity. Secondly, citizens are divided by entities in terms of voting, so that Bosniaks and Croats are denied the right to run for Presidency if they live in RS, and Serbs are denied the same right if they live in FB&H. The current Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina provides ethnic voting instead of democracy and besides completely discriminating all minorities, also discriminates against the three constituent peoples based on the place of residence. Decisions are made through consensus, which means that a member of Presidency can block entire institutions with their lack of presence. In addition to blocking the work of the Presidency through non-participation in its work, abuse of the veto as a mechanism in this body is constitutionally unregulated. Please note that when a consensus cannot be reached in the Presidency and when there is an overvote in the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina with a vote of two to one, the overvoted member is given the opportunity to declare within 72 hours whether the decision is destructive to

the vital interest of the entity and the people from which they were elected. If a member of the Presidency vetoes a decision within the prescribed period, then the decision is sent for consideration to the legislative body of the entity from which the member of the Presidency who vetoed was elected (the National Assembly of the RS if Serbs member of Presidency is opposed to the decision, and to the House of Peoples of the Federation of B&H if the veto is vetoed by a Bosniak or Croat member of the Presidency). If the opinion of a member of the Presidency is confirmed by a two-thirds vote, referring to the vote within the body to which it was referred, ten days after its referral, such a decision of the Presidency will not enter into force and the decision of the B&H Presidency is invalidated. The decision-making mechanism conceived in this way would not be a problem if the veto was not abused.

**Lack of mechanism for compliance  
and application of Decisions of the Constitutional  
Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

One of the key problems in the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the fact that there is no direct legal mechanism provided in the Constitution, based on which decisions of the Constitutional Court of B&H are implemented and/or state and/or lower authorities and individuals are legally sanctioned for non-compliance and/or blocking the implementation of those decisions. Article VI, paragraph 3 of the Constitution of B&H talks about the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court, while Article VI, paragraph 4 of the Constitution of B&H states that the decisions of the Constitutional Court are final and binding, but implementation

and responsibility for execution are not regulated. The responsibility of the execution of the decisions of the Constitutional Court in B&H is conceived so that it depends on the voluntary compliance with the constitutional decisions. Considering the scope of non-execution of the decisions of the constitutional court, we can conclude that the responsibility of domestic actors is absent, and the rule of law is underdeveloped. Voluntary compliance with constitutional decisions, and here we will paraphrase constitutional law professor Javier Garcia Roca, largely depends on the development of the political culture of constitutionalism itself.<sup>23</sup> In post-conflict societies, after the establishment of peace, the primary goal is to secure the most urgent features of democracy, which is the adoption of a democratic constitution and the regular holding of democratic elections, why the consolidation of the rule of law as such falls into the background.<sup>24</sup> In theory, with the development of political culture, courts generally become increasingly involved in matters with political influence. However, shift in power relations and tensions often appear between the three branches of government. B&H is specific as Constitutional Court has or could have influence on political power-positions of three constitutive peoples or the entities. This is why non-execution of Constitutional Court rulings is majorly coming from the entity RS.

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23. Garcia Javier Roca, *Europe of Rights: A Compendium on the European Convention of Human Rights*, 2012, <https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/21004>.

24. Kasim Trnka, *Konstitutivnost naroda: Povodom odluke Ustavnog suda Bosne i Hercegovine o konstitutivnosti Bošnjaka, Hrvata i Srba na nivou entiteta*, Vijeće kongresa bošnjačkih intelektualaca, Gračanica, 2000.

### **Role of the High Representative for B&H**

Work of governmental bodies can be boycotted by national delegates and Constitution gave such possibilities through legislative provisions. De facto, political leaders from the RS are constantly boycotting the execution of Constitutional Court decisions that specifically refer to that entity and additionally boycott work of other governmental bodies through lack of attendance. To foresee civil implementation of Dayton Peace Agreement, International community assumed the presence of High Representative for B&H through Anex 10 of Dayton Peace Agreement. The processes and obligations that cannot be entrusted to domestic actors to complete and fulfill, are entrusted to the High Representative. He has a power to impose law-binding decisions and dismiss officials from power if they work against the Constitution and Dayton Peace Agreement. However, High Representatives cannot interfere in constitutional reform. Office of High Representative was initially envisioned as short-term solution for transition to democracy in post-war period. Unfortunately, domestic elites cannot achieve consensus about any state-wise important decisions and Office of High Representative is still in charge of making the most important political decisions for B&H. However, Bosnia's dependence on the international community is viewed particularly negatively in the context of its readiness for any serious European integration, because the same dependence is interpreted as the impossibility of the political elites in B&H for integrative action. EU particularly criticizes the foreign presence in the most important political decision-making in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also the impossibility



of any institutional improvement that would come solely from the work of domestic actors. Overall, the High Representative, while present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has the obligation to supervise the implementation of the civilian part of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Meaning he is obliged to ensure respect for state institutions, the decisions of the Constitutional Court, and Dayton Peace Agreement.

### **European Court for Human Rights and “Sejdić-Finci” group of judgments**

When it comes to attempts by the international community to point out discriminatory elements in the Constitution of B&H, a significant role is played by the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg. Its judgments were ruled in favour of the citizens, and to the detriment of the state of B&H. One of the priorities for membership in the European Union, which Bosnia and Herzegovina must resolve and harmonize with EU legislation, is precisely the implementation of those judgments to correct structural errors. In Article II.1 and Article II.2. of the Anex 4; Constitution, it is stated that *European convention for protection of human rights and basic freedoms and its Protocols have supremacy over domestic law and will be directly applicable in B&H* (Anex 4). At the same time, ethnically based power-sharing and decision making in national institutions deeply violate those human rights. This is confirmed by judgments of European court for Human Rights in group of

judgments known as *Sejdić-Finci vs. Bosnia-Herzegovina*. One of the priorities for membership in the European Union, which Bosnia-Herzegovina must resolve and harmonize with EU legislation, is precisely the implementation of judgments to correct these structural errors. In May 2019 the European Commission adopted an Opinion (Avis) on Bosnia-Herzegovina's application for membership in the EU, which, among other things, stated that B&H still does not sufficiently meet the criteria related to the stability of institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minorities, set by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993.<sup>25</sup>

The first such judgment was in 2009 when the decision was made in the case "*Sejdić and Finci v. B&H*", in which it was clearly stated that the Constitution is discriminatory because it does not allow someone from minorities to run for the position of a member of the Presidency or a delegate in the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly. Dervo Sjeđić, on behalf of the Roma community, and Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, filed an appeal with the European Court for Human Rights warning of these discriminatory provisions. In the past fifteen years, numerous debates, round tables and gatherings of international, governmental and non-governmental organizations have been coordinated. The topic was precisely the implementation of that ruling, which should change the Constitution,

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25. Commission Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union– Council conclusions, December 10, 2019, Brussels.

and consequently the Election Law, but this has not yet happened. Rather it started a domino effect of serious similar rulings.

In July 2014, the European Court for Human Rights issued a verdict in the case “Zornić v. B&H” due to Ms. Zornić’s inability to participate in the elections for the House of Peoples and the Presidency as a candidate, because she does not declare herself to be a member of one of the three named constituent peoples<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, in 2016, the Court of Human Rights decided in the “Pilav v. B&H” case, that Ilijaz Pilav from Srebrenica, entity Republic of Srpska, being unable to run in the elections for a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina because he is Bosniak living in entity of Republic of Srpska is against the law. The court concluded that Mr. Pilav, who declares himself to be a member of one of the three equal or constituent peoples, had the constitutional right to participate in the elections for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the Constitution and the Election Law say that three members of Presidency (one Bosniak, one Croat and one Serb) are selected such that Croat and Bosniak members can only be elected from the constituency of entity Federation Bosnia-Herzegovina, while Serbs member’s constituency is entity of Republic of Srpska. He would have to leave his home and move to the entity Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to realize his right. Similarly, in December 2020, the European Court for Human Rights issued a verdict in the case

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26. Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and Others are named in the Constitution as equal. However, three named ethnic groups are considered constitutive peoples and only constitutive peoples have right to be elected in political institutions.

“Pudarić v. B&H”, in which it found that B&H discriminated against Svetozar Pudarić in connection with the right to run for membership of the Presidency from among the Serbian people in territory of the Federation Bosnia-Herzegovina. Svetozar Pudarić ran in the general elections in 2018 as a member of the Presidency from among the Serbian people, but his candidacy was rejected by the Central Election Commission of Bosnia, because as a Serb with a place of residence in the Federation of B&H, he cannot run for that position. The last judgment of this category was passed on August 29, 2023, in the case “Kovačević v. B&H”. In this application, the applicant Slaven Kovačević, who was born in Sarajevo, where he lives and works as a political adviser to a member of the Presidency, complained that he, as someone who has not declared that he belongs to a single named nation, is not represented in the House of Peoples, because his positions are exclusively reserved for Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. Also, this was the first time that a violation of the right to vote was detected, while previous complaints related to passive suffrage. That is why it is important to note that the application also referred to the claim of the applicant Kovačević that in the last elections for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, his choice was limited because he could only vote for a Bosniak or Croat member of the Presidency. He could not vote for the Serbs member of the Presidency because only citizens from the Republic of Srpska entity have that option. This was the case due to the mixture of territorial and ethnic criteria, which have already been explained, and the European Court of Human Rights emphasized in its judgment that “no one should be

forced to vote only according to prescribed ethnic lines, regardless of their political point of view”, and therefore considers that the right of the applicant is violated. Therefore, in this case, the Court identified two forms of discrimination, namely discrimination related to the applicant’s right to be represented in the House of Peoples, and discrimination related to his active right to vote for a member of Presidency.

## Conclusion

The path of European integration for B&H is very specific, especially when we compare the situation with countries in the region. We have seen that, although there is a unique foreign policy strategy for European integration, there is no cooperation of domestic political elites or consensus on the scope of acceptable reforms. Faced with specific challenges arising from internal divisions, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains stuck in a long post-war transition. We researched what is the imperative of that transition and concluded that, despite the deterioration of the political situation and the minimal progress of B&H in the adoption of European legislation, the candidate status was granted due to the new geopolitical importance of the European integration process after the Russian war against Ukraine. The inevitable constitutional reform is still an imperative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of obtaining candidate status. Given that we have so far had three

significant failed attempts at constitutional reforms: the April package, the Butmir package and the Prud package, the international community is very sceptical of Bosnia's readiness for a new attempt at constitutional reform. The imperative of constitutional reform is directly related to what we consider the biggest limitation of the current political system, elections, the composition and decision-making within political institutions. For Bosnia and Herzegovina to secure a place in the EU, the judgments of the European Court for Human Rights regarding violations of fundamental rights and freedoms must be implemented. More specifically, the judgment of the European Court for Human Rights in the case of *Kovačević v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* could potentially cause tensions in the process of preparation for accession, as the Court found that the current political system gives priority to ethnic representation in relation to political, economic, philosophical and other factors, which exacerbates ethnic divisions. Additionally, it undermines the democratic nature of elections. As the nations designated by the constitution have a privileged position within this system, the general assessment of B&H is that its Constitution is not in accordance with the European Convention for Human Rights, which was determined by the verdicts in the *Kovačević* cases, the youngest case, and other related cases from the so-called *Sejdić-Finci* group of judgments.

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# Re-Imagining Security after Russia's War against Ukraine. The Cases of Serbia and Montenegro

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*Laura Herța, Ramona Neagoș*

## Interpreting Security. Developments and Perspectives

The challenges brought about by growing globalization represent the causes for the elevation of the notion *human security* to prominence. However, Russia's war against Ukraine seems to indicate that it is now time to regress from the encompassing concept of *human security* to the rather narrow concept of *national security* of the realists, the traditionalists in International Relations.

Security is an immensely controversial concept precisely because it is a sub-category of the greater globalization debate, still referred to by many as the latest form of the longer-lasting dispute between *state-centrism* and *non-state-centrism*.

Realists/neo-realists have been attentive to the globalization debate, but they are persistently dismissive of globalization's crucial impact on the international system and its novelty. Moreover, they reject the system redefining attributes of globalization because the globalization thesis challenges basically most of realism's fundamental analytical assumptions. Therefore, in the field of International Relations (IR), the globalization debate is about the continuing relevance or irrelevance of realism or neo-realism as theoretical perspectives. For this reason, the neo-neo debate is significantly concentrated on realists/neo-realists, on the one hand, and neo-liberals and Cosmopolitans, on the other.

During the late 1970s, the parsimony of neo-realism led almost every major theoretical innovation in the field of International Relations to react against neo-realism. Neo-liberalism (or Liberal institutionalism) posed the greatest challenge to realist and neo-realist thought. This version of neo-liberalism has its origins in the integration scholarship of the 1940s and 1950s pioneered by David Mitrany. The latter was then followed by a new generation of regional integration scholars of the 1960s and 1970s who started to challenge the realist one-sided vision of state dominance of international relations. This new generation of regional integration studies went beyond the argument of their predecessors that trade and multilateral cooperation is the way towards peace and

prosperity. They argued that a plurality of actors, rather than just the states, influence world politics. For this reason, these scholars are often referred to as pluralists.

Louis Kriesberg distinguished two major variations of pluralism: the globalist and the “multiple-actor” versions. According to his approach,

“the globalist or world-systems perspective focuses on economic development and socioeconomic inequalities in the world as a whole. Analysts such as Wallerstein, Cardoso, and Magdoff have sought to explain the rise of capitalism as a world system and the ways in which dominant economic countries maintain their dominance [...]. Many analysts of the contemporary world system go well beyond global economic interdependence to stress the proliferation of transnational organizations, nongovernmental and governmental, such as the United Nations. Peace is based on high levels of integration and mutual dependence and must rely on the effective working of international organizations.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Louis Kriesberg, *International Conflict resolution. The U.S.-USSR and the Middle East Cases*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992, pp. 7-8. For more on this see: Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System II*, New York: Academic Press, 1980; Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979; Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism*, New York: Monthly Review press, 1969; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

In a seminal text of this field, pluralist analysts Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1972) stressed the need, for students, political scientists and practitioners of international politics, to overcome the excessive concentration on a *state-centric* view of world affairs and acknowledge the many transnational actors and forces that operate outside the realm of the state. The authors argued that governments suffered from a loss of control as a result of transnational relations and that Intergovernmental Organizations were undermining state dominance. Also, for pluralists, the “distinctions between high and low politics are of diminishing value in current world politics.”<sup>2</sup> Arguably, the most significant contribution of pluralism was its development of the notion of *interdependence*; for neo-liberal institutionalism, “the reconceptualization of power that underlay Keohane and Nye’s approach to international political economy (IPE), in which coercive military force is replaced by asymmetrical interdependence and institutional agenda control, was part of a revolution across the discipline of political science. It was an application of Robert Dahl’s pluralist politics model at the international system, with implications perhaps more far-reaching in international politics than even in U.S. Politics.”<sup>3</sup>

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2. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and Robert O. Keohane, “Transnational Relations and World Politics: A Conclusion”, *International Organization*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Summer 1971, p. 728.

3. Andrew Moravcsik, “Afterword. Robert Keohane: Political Theorist”, in Helen V. Milner and Andrew Moravcsik (eds.), *Power, Interdependence, and Nonstate Actors in World Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 260, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/keohane.pdf>, last accessed in 01.08.2024.

However, this is not to suggest that other non-traditional IR theoretical approaches, notably Feminism, Critical Theory, Social Constructivism, and the Copenhagen School, do not have a significant contribution to the understanding of the study of security and also in the wider Globalization debate, but each of these perspectives still remains relevant in both globalists and state-centric world views alike.

“The key point, however, is that none of these alternative perspectives is predicated on ontological assumptions about the centrality or non-centrality of the state in International Relations. As such, they have rather less invested in the globalization debate than neo-realism, neo-liberalism, and, indeed, cosmopolitanism. Each offers an analytical/theoretical perspective that can be brought to bear on the world system independently of its degree of globalization. Each has a relevance and a critical purchase in both state-centric and the non-state-centric world alike. And each perspective contains amongst its advocates globalists and skeptics. The stakes are, by contrast, significantly higher for neo-realists, neo-liberals, and cosmopolitans. For each, the degree of globalization is an index of the degree of the relevance/irrelevance of their theoretical perspective.”<sup>4</sup>

This article adopts the “deepening” approach in the field of Security Studies led by Neoliberal institutionalism and enriched

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4. Colin Hay, “International Relations Theory and Globalization”, in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Narrated by Grant Cartwright, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, Chapter 15, Fifth Edition, Audible. Audiobook.

by Feminism, Social Constructivism and Critical theories in International Relations which not only widen the discipline (*i.e.* incorporating non-military issues which affect the security of the state), but also shifts the focus of the subject to the security of people rather than states, *i.e.* to human security, arguing that the primary *referent object* of security should be the individual/people, not the state.

Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School went beyond the “wideners”, by theorizing the concepts of securitisation / desecuritization and by analysing security as a speech act. They argued that the concept of securitisation entails the construction of threats and that an issue can be made a “security issue” even if it is not threatening the states, through social pressure being put on the governments to “do something”. However, the state-centric logic is maintained by the fact that the state remains the securitizing actor. In other words, the state decides whether the issue is to be addressed with “measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.”<sup>5</sup> According to the Copenhagen School, “threats and vulnerabilities [...] to count as security issues [...] they have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergent measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.”<sup>6</sup>

Critical theorists, like, for example, Richard Wyn Jones, also observe that Buzan “does pay some attention to the security of the

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5. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, UK edition, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p. 5.

6. *Ibidem*.

individuals, as well as security at the supra-state levels of particular regions and of the international system itself. However, in the final analysis, his interests in these other levels centres on their impact upon states,"<sup>7</sup> hence reiterating the same state-centrism.

Another prominent advocate of making individuals the referent of security is the critical theorist Ken Booth (a former realist). Booth's focus on individualism is not to be interpreted as a form of liberal individualism. The individual is always the ultimate referent for critical theory. However, the critical theory's emphasis on the individual altered and extended the liberal universals of the "individual" and the implications of liberal individualism. Ken Booth's emphasis on the individual as the "ultimate referent" of security is more fully comprehended in the light of the emancipation project: "Emancipation should be given precedence in security thinking over the traditional realist themes of power and order [...] Emancipation means freeing people from those constraints that stop them carrying out what freely they would choose to do, of which war, poverty, oppression and poor education are a few. Security and emancipation are in fact two sides of the same coin."<sup>8</sup>

According to Amitav Acharya, critical theories "have enriched our understanding both of how states can threaten the security of the individual and of the role of global civil society in the promotion of human security" while "constructivist insights

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7. Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, p. 112.

8. Ken Booth, "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice", *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 67, No. 3, Jul., 1991, p. 539.



are important in understanding how human security ideas are promoted by global norm entrepreneurs and how shifts in the global ideational structure can help or hinder prospects for human security.”<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, for neo-liberal institutionalism, the emphasis on the individual, to the detriment of the state, is a predictable stance to adopt within the theoretical paradigm. Neoliberals led the way amongst the “deepeners” in the conceptualisation of *human security*, also arguing that the individual should be the central object of security. Critical theorists (emancipatory in their orientation) claim that the idea of the individual as the “ultimate referent” reflects in fact the developments of human security as a critical theoretical notion which was exploited by the neo-liberal scholars. Amitav Acharya argues that, in fact, “human security is not a liberal, constructivist, or critical theoretical notion that realists are obliged to oppose with all their fury and disdain [...]. Human security is in itself a holistic paradigm.”<sup>10</sup>

The deepening approach of framing what a security issue is and what it is not is reflected by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):

“For too long, the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country’s borders. For too long, nations have sought arms to protect their security. For most

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9. Amitav Acharya, “A Holistic Paradigm”, *Security Dialogue*, Volume 35, No.3, September, 2004, p. 356.

10. *Ibidem* p. 356.

people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime – these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world.”<sup>11</sup>

The report also reiterated the fact that the founders of the United Nations had always given equal importance to people’s security and to territorial security, that is to say, characterising human security by both “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. In her work, titled *Human Security*, Mary Kaldor observes that the new concept of human security “potentially offers a new approach both to security and to development [...] and it combines both human rights and human development.”<sup>12</sup>

But the notion of ‘human security’ is in itself a controversial notion which has advanced considerably since it was initially developed in the pioneering report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), back in 1994. There is still lack of consensus and opposition to the concept, especially within the academic community of international relations and political science and also in the political discourse. As Mary Kaldor argued, in the above mentioned study, the notion of human security seems to have developed in two directions.

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11. *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*, 1994, Human Development report, 1994, New York: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), 1994, p. 24, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-1994>, last accessed in 31.07.2024.

12. Mary Kaldor, *Human Security. Reflections on Globalization and Intervention*, 1st edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 185.

“One was the approach taken by the Canadian government, which adopted the concept and established a network of like-minded states who subscribe to the concept. Their version [...] has some affinity to the notion of ‘responsibility to protect.’ [...] Their primary emphasis is on security in the face of political violence. The other approach was the UNDP approach [...]. This approach emphasised the interrelatedness of different types of security and the importance of development, in particular, as a security strategy.”<sup>13</sup>

Criticisms and challenges related to the concept of human security, which incorporates both “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”, as developed by the 1994 *Human Development Report* (HDR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), were primarily directed towards the very definition of the notion: “human security does not have any definite boundaries; therefore anything and everything could be considered a risk to security. This makes the task of policy formulation nearly impossible.”<sup>14</sup>

This concern led some advocates of the people-centred approach to security to develop a less expansive version of the notion of human security, by prioritising mainly the idea of “freedom from fear.” The Canadian government favoured such an approach

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13. *Ibidem*, p. 183.

14. *The Human Security Framework and National Human Development Reports: A Review of Experiences and Current Debates*, New York: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), 2006, p. 1, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-security-framework-and-national-human-development-reports>, last accessed in 01.08.2024.

when integrating human security aspects into their foreign policies. The foreign policy implications of human security, according to a Canadian government report from 1999, are formulated as follows: “security policies must be integrated much more closely with strategies for promoting human rights, democracy, and development. Human rights, humanitarian and refugee law provide the normative framework on which a human security approach is based. Development strategies offer broadly based means of addressing many long-term human security challenges. One of the dividends of adopting a human security approach is that it further elaborates a people-centred foreign policy.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, while taking people as its point of reference, as opposed to the security of territory or governments, when it comes to the task of foreign policy formulation, their primary emphasis is on security in the face of political violence, *i.e.* physical violence. Conversely, the Japanese government’s advocacy of human security has been more aligned with the extensive version as favoured by the UNDP and employed in this study.

When it comes to the task of foreign policy formulation, the Commission on Human Security, chaired by Nobel Laureate in Economics (1998) Amartya Sen and former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, was established in 2001 and its main task was to make recommendations for policy. The 2003 report of the Sen-Ogata Commission argued that the de-

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15. *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World*, Ottawa: Department for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999, <http://www.summit-americas.org/Canada/Humansecurity-english.htm>, last accessed in 01.08.2024.

mands of human security involve a broad range of interconnected issues (including “freedom from want”):

“In its work, the Commission has concentrated on a number of distinct but interrelated areas concerned with conflict and poverty, protecting people during violent conflict and in post-conflict situations, defending people who are forced to move, overcoming economic insecurities, guaranteeing the availability and affordability of essential health care, and ensuring the elimination of illiteracy and educational deprivation and of schools that promote intolerance. The recommendations of the Commission involve policies aimed at both empowerment and protection, and focus on what can be done in the short and the long run to enhance the opportunities for eliminating insecurities across the world.”<sup>16</sup>

The Japanese interpretation of human security does not replace the security of the state with the security of the people; rather it views them as mutually dependent aspects: “Security between states remains a necessary condition for the security of people, but national security is not sufficient to guarantee peoples’ security. For that, the state must provide various protections to its citizens. But individuals also require protection from the arbitrary power of the state, through the rule of law and emphasis on civil and political rights as well as socio-economic rights.”<sup>17</sup>

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16. *Human security now: protecting and empowering people* / Commission on Human Security, New York: Commission on Human Security, 2003, p. 3, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/503749?v=pdf>, last accessed in 01.08.2024.

17. *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

By 2004, the report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, chaired by Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand focused on finding a new security consensus based on the recognition that threats are interlinked, that development, security and human rights are mutually interdependent. As far as collective security and the challenge of prevention are concerned, the panel began with development, because, as the report emphasizes, "it serves multiple functions. It helps combat the poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation that kill millions and threaten human security. It is vital in helping States prevent or reverse the erosion of State capacity, which is crucial for meeting almost every class of threat. And it is part of a long-term strategy for preventing civil war and for addressing the environments in which both terrorism and organized crime flourish."<sup>18</sup>

What happens if peaceful prevention fails? The panel reached consensus on the principle of the responsibility to protect and the right to intervene. This was followed by the Secretary-General's own report *In Larger Freedom*, issued a few months later for the World Summit in September 2005, which urged Heads of State and Government to:

"embrace the 'responsibility to protect' as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and agree to act on this responsibility, recognizing

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18. *Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit*, New York: The UN General Assembly (UNGA), 2004, p. 12, [https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/gaA.59.565\\_En.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/gaA.59.565_En.pdf), last accessed in 01.08.2024.

that this responsibility lies first and foremost with each individual State, whose duty it is to protect its population, but that if national authorities are unwilling or unable to protect their citizens, then the responsibility shifts to the international community to use diplomatic, humanitarian and other methods to help protect civilian populations, and that if such methods appear insufficient the Security Council may out of necessity decide to take action under the Charter, including enforcement action, if so required.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Global threats, new sources of insecurity, and the Pandemic**

The realist way of interpreting security implies that a sharp distinction should be drawn between domestic (“low”) and international (“high”) politics in order for policy-makers to effectively advance and best serve the national interest. As a result, states with more power (narrowly defined in military strategic terms) stand a better chance to survive in the international environment. Therefore, military issues are security issues and must be prioritised by governments. States must seek to increase their military capabilities, if they feel threatened.

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19. *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all: report of the Secretary-General*, New York: UN. Secretary-General, 2005, p. 59, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/543857?v=pdf>, last accessed in 01.08.2024.

As documented by the UNDP 2022 Special Report on Human Security most states do tend to adopt a realist approach in their foreign policies and this is reflected by the amount of state expenditure dedicated to the pursuit of military security. The report states that “military spending shows no signs of abating — instead of a peace dividend, we confront a world with violent conflict afflicting more than a billion people.”<sup>20</sup> The peace dividend (*i.e.* the savings from military spending) to support human development was a foundational point in the Human Development Report of 1994.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the world’s military spending reached its highest level since the end of the Cold War, numbering a total of \$2443 billion in 2023: “World military expenditure, driven by Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and heightened geopolitical tensions, rose by 6.8 per cent in real terms [...] to \$2443 billion in 2023, the highest level ever recorded by SIPRI. [...] The world military burden—defined as military spending as a percentage of global gross domestic product (GDP)—increased to 2.3 per cent in 2023. Average military expenditure as a share of government expenditure rose by 0.4 percentage points to 6.9 per cent in 2023 and world military spending per person was the highest since 1990, at \$306.”<sup>21</sup>

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20. *New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity*, 2022 Special Report on Human Security, New York: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), 2022, p. 24, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2022-special-report-human-security>, last accessed in 31.07.2024.

21. Nan Tian *et al.*, “Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2023” in *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Publications*, 1 April 2024, p. 1, doi: <https://doi.org/10.55163/BQGA2180>, last accessed in 31.07.2024.



However, the UNDP 2022 Special Report on Human Security demonstrates that the complexity of human security challenges — “interconnected, multidimensional and universal, with heterogeneous effects on people”<sup>22</sup> — are measurable, with data-driven research backing the misplacement of expenditure priorities: “an important element in driving the policy and broader behaviour response needed to ease planetary pressures is the availability of data-for-human-security around Anthropocene-related threats.”<sup>23</sup>

Due to the realist approach focusing on the national security imperative, it is evident that the governments are not prioritizing the spending for the protection against non-military security risks that also pose equal or even higher threats to people worldwide today. For instance, the health threats to security became evident during the Covid-19 pandemic as we witnessed how the virus has infected and killed millions of people across the world. A truly global catastrophe, the Covid-19 revealed new, growing threats to human security and their interconnected character. The health crisis soon turned into a socioeconomic crisis, which exposed the inequalities in access to digital technologies, the assault on human dignity and so on.

The UNDP 2022 Special Report on Human Security elevates the notion of “human security” to reflect today’s new reality, by emphasizing the fact that all of humanity “is vulnerable to the unprecedented process of planetary change we are experiencing during the Anthropocene.”<sup>24</sup> The Anthropocene is a term adopt-

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22. UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) *op. cit.*, p. 61.

23. *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

24. *Ibidem*, p. iii.

ed also by the UNDP to describe the era in which “humans have become central drivers of planetary change, radically altering the earth’s biosphere.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Societal security**

Undoubtedly, another limit of the realist interpretation of security is exposed by situations in which states become direct source of their citizen’s insecurity. In 1993, right after the Cold War and in the context of the new security problems emerging in Europe at the time, the Copenhagen School of Security Studies introduced a new referent object into security studies, namely “society”. According to the authors Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, and Pierre Lemaitre “the classical functions of government are to provide security for the state against both external threats and internal challenges to the legitimate order. [...] To the extent that governments are representative of their people, there should therefore be considerable complementarity between government and societal security. But governments are not always, or even not usually, representative, and they may threaten societies both within and outside their jurisdiction.”<sup>26</sup>

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25. *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

26. Ole Wæver *et al.*, *Identity, Migration, and the New Security Agenda in Europe*, London: Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1993, p. 48.

In this view, in weak states (*i.e.* in which societal identities and governmental legitimacy work against each other<sup>27</sup>) people fall victims to tyrannical regimes with “brutal governments that may simply kill, relocate or expel peoples of unwanted identity”<sup>28</sup>, therefore prioritising what they perceive as national interest. Under such regimes, different groups can, in multiple ways, be perceived as threats to the national interest and depicted as such for political reasons by governments or the dominant sectors of society. The authors discuss situations “where governments take ethnic sides (Serbs vs. Croats, Sinhalese vs. Tamils, whites vs. blacks) or promote either a homogenising state-national identity (Russification, Sinification), or an anti-ethnic state-ideological one (communist, Islamic),”<sup>29</sup> becoming therefore “the main agents of threat to existing societies from competing identities.”<sup>30</sup>

But what are the so-called competing identities? When defining the concept of societal security, the authors explain that “at its most basic, social identity is what enables the word ‘we’ to be used. [...] A ‘we’ identity can vary across a wide spectrum in terms of the size of the group to which it applies, the intensity with which it is felt, and the reasons that create a sense of belonging together. [...] The security of a society can be threatened by whatever puts its ‘we’ identity into jeopardy.”<sup>31</sup>

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27. *Ibidem*, p. 49.

28. *Ibidem*, *loc.cit.*

29. *Ibidem*, *loc.cit.*

30. *Ibidem*, *loc.cit.*

31. *Ibidem*, p. 42.

Forms of violent societal discrimination – with national identity, religious identity, gender identity, sexual identity (orientation) or disability as a basis for conflict of discriminatory violence – take place in many states, democratic or not. However, the authors focus more on national and religious identities, not because other types of social groups are not equally important in the construction of society, but because nationalism, religion are “robust enough in construction, and comprehensive enough in its following, but also broad enough in the quality of identity it carries, to enable it to compete with the territorial state as a political organizing principle.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the argument goes, “like nationalism, religion has the considerable political advantage of reproducing its ‘we’ identity across generations in a more or less automatic fashion.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, within the social sector itself, “threats from competing identities arise when identities are mutually exclusive.”<sup>34</sup>

This has led the Copenhagen School’s to the argument that societal security, rather than the states, should take central stage for security analysis. The idea of safeguarding citizens against external threats, but also of protecting citizens against each other through legal, political and military actions is an essential function of the state. But, as discussed above, most states around the world, democratic or not, prioritise the pursuit of the national interest over human rights and human security. Violent discrimination against minority groups can manifest even in democratic states. But, at least

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32. *Ibidem*, p. 23.

33. *Ibidem*, p. 22.

34. *Ibidem*, p. 44.

in principle, “democracy can ideally be seen as a set of strategies to create both security from possible domestic societal threats (in securing government by law, public order, non-violence, non-discrimination, peaceful conflict resolution, adequate police-protection etc.) and security from the threat of the state (constitutional government, separation of powers, human rights, minority protection, participation and possibilities of changing government).”<sup>35</sup>

Critics of the national interest-based approach argue that this demonstrates the incapacity of the realist / traditional governance to ensure its citizens’ security, as the guarantor of human rights, human security and humanitarian benefits. According to the Copenhagen School’s view, in types of ‘modern’ and ‘pre-modern states,’<sup>36</sup> the government is the most likely source of domestic threat to society. For Mary Kaldor, “the primacy of human rights is what distinguishes the human security approach from traditional state-based approaches.”<sup>37</sup> Human rights have been built and integrated into the international society since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations in 1948.

However, the challenges of the Anthropocene (propelled by rapid digital expansion) is raising the possibility “now, and in the future, to claim the complete validity of human rights based purely on their status as a social construct”<sup>38</sup>, whose nature is not stable

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35. *Ibidem*, p. 50.

36. *Ibidem*, p. 187.

37. Kaldor, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

38. Jack Donnelly, “The social construction of international human rights”, *Relaciones Internacionales*, No. 17, June, 2011, p. 1.

or unchanging; additionally, it is connected to the ways in which freedom from fear and want and human dignity are understood and also to the state's approach to security, as a direct source of their citizens' insecurity or recognising its limitations as a guarantor of human rights and human security, which results in the need to take political and legal steps in implementing international law on human rights.

At the same time, the "universalism – cultural relativism" debate remains. Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, in a work entitled "China and the Global Reach of Human Rights" invites us to ask ourselves "why and how China matters in 'moral globalization' in a morally divided world in the instance of human rights."<sup>39</sup> The authors highlight the "sharp contradictions in the relationship between China and the global human rights norms and regimes. On the one hand, China has been socialized into signing and ratifying most human rights treaties and conventions. The omnipresence of human rights rhetoric in Chinese official discourse is plainly notable. On the other, such omnipresence has not been matched by the improved record of political and civil rights in China."<sup>40</sup>

In 1993, concluding their work on defining the societal security concept, the authors of the Copenhagen School suggested that, in thinking about the notion of societal security, one must keep in mind that it is important to avoid the image of an undifferentiated contemporary international system. The authors argued that

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39. Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, "China and the global reach of human rights", *China Quarterly*, 241, 2020, pp. 1-2, doi: 10.1017/S0305741019000833, last accessed in 01.08.2024.

40. *Ibidem*, loc.cit.

“societal security might well come to relate to recent discussions on the post-modern (vs. modern and pre-modern) state, which could become a significant feature in the analysis of international relations. The post-modern state is one in which society plays a dominant role in politics, and the state, heavily constrained by law and openness, is more its right holder and servant than its master. [...] The contemporary international system is composed of a mixture of these three types, but the centre of power in the system is dominated by (mostly Western) post-modern states.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Playing by Different Rules: Back to the Neo-Neo Debate?**

One of the Neo-liberal institutionalism’s critique of Realism, pertaining to the concept of security, is the fact that contemporary global system is associated with a proliferation of security issues that nation states never had the capacity to deal with and which go beyond the traditional focus of security studies to include non-military security issues that are global in scope and scale such as: environmental threats to security, digital technology’s threats to security, health threats to security such as global epidemics / pandemics, the growth of cross-border financial transactions such as the financial contagion which caused the global financial crisis, human rights abuses and so on.

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41. Wæver *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

In the famous debate titled “Realism vs. cosmopolitanism”, a debate between Barry Buzan and David Held conducted by Anthony McGrew, Barry Buzan, one of the leading scholars of the Copenhagen School, manages to defend the fundamentals of contemporary realism in the context of globalization while also accepting almost all of the points of the cosmopolitan approach advocated by David Held and Andrew Linklater, but also by liberal institutionalists like Joseph Nye and Robert O. Keohane. For example, regarding the issue of nation states as sovereign, Buzan admitted that “in relation to the emergence of a world economy, and to some extent the development of a world society, and even in terms of transportation and communication systems, it is clearly naive now to think of a world made up of sovereign states which ‘contain’ everything.”<sup>42</sup> Buzan also recognises the growing importance of non-state actors in the international stage: “it is not so much that I think that realism is wrong; it is a mistake to assume that the state is disappearing. The state is still there, and to some extent, therefore, the realist logic still applies. But other things have become more important and one has to judge realism in relation to the importance of these other areas.”<sup>43</sup>

But he also draws the attention that globalization is very differently distributed and, therefore, there are parts of the world in which the realists’ logic still apply:

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42. Barry Buzan, David Held and Anthony McGrew, “Realism Vs Cosmopolitanism”, *Review of International Studies*, Volume. 24, No. 3, Jul, 1998, p. 390.

43. *Ibidem*, loc.cit.



“There are plenty of parts of the world in which the realist rules of the game still apply. If you look at, say, relations in East Asia [...], this has an awful lot still of the flavour of realism about it. Accordingly, I think it would be a mistake to assume that the whole world has reformed itself in the same way that the most advanced parts of the world have. My view is that the world is really divided into two or three spheres in which the rules of the game are quite different because the level of globalization is very differently distributed.”<sup>44</sup>

However, in Buzan’s view, realism “is very much fixated on the state because the state is, of course, the key political unit in the international system and [...] “as long as the international system is divided into states, the relations between states will have this characteristic of being about power politics.”<sup>45</sup>

## Security and the Like-minded States of Modernity

In response to the challenges faced by today’s liberal internationalism in relation to modernity – understood as “the ongoing transformations of societies and international relations driven by science, technology, and the industrial revolution” -, John Ikenberry argues that liberal democracy itself is under threat by, *inter alia*, “the rise of China and the resurgence of Russia as different kinds

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44. *Ibidem*, loc.cit.

45. *Ibidem*, p. 388.

of revisionist powers that have opened the door to rival political projects with illiberal ideologies. If China's 'project of modernity' of building capitalism without liberalism or democracy succeeds and outperforms its Western rivals, the implications for liberalism will be profound."<sup>46</sup> As critical theorists pointed out, the most evident limitation of a *state-centric* national security approach emerges when governments become a direct source of their citizen's insecurity. Autocratic states own and harness science and technology for their own aggressive purposes, while liberal democratic states seem to be protective shelters for technological giants.

The limitation of current arms control architecture represents a preview of the same limitations of the international legal force in relation to global digital regulation. As Peter Hough states, "the apparent Russian use of chemical agents in assassinations against opponents, when that country has supposedly destroyed all such stocks, illustrates the weakness of what is actually the most rigorous of the WMD treaties."<sup>47</sup> However, scholars such as Shoshana Zuboff point out that currently democracy is situated in a vulnerable position in relation to technological advancement exerting oligopolistic control with "citizens marching naked, easy prey for all who steal and hunt with human data."<sup>48</sup> Zuboff draws

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46. G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy. Liberal Institutionalism and the Crises of Global Order*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020, p. 288.

47. Peter Hough, *Understanding Global Security*, Fifth edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2023, p. 52.

48. Shoshana Zuboff, "Surveillance Capitalism or Democracy? The Death Match of Institutional Orders and the Politics of Knowledge

attention to the fact that “the abdication of the world’s information spaces to surveillance capitalism has become the meta-crisis of every republic”<sup>49</sup> (the liberal democracies and all societies) with “the surveillance capitalist giants—Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, and their ecosystems—now constituting a sweeping political-economic institutional order that exerts oligopolistic control over most digital information and communication spaces, systems, and processes.”<sup>50</sup>

In Zuboff’s opinion, the democratic order is “the only competing institutional order that poses an existential threat ‘to surveillance capitalism’; according to her, “while the liberal democracies have begun to engage with the challenges of regulating today’s privately owned information spaces, I argue that regulation of institutionalized processes that are innately catastrophic for democratic societies cannot produce desired outcomes.” Zuboff concludes that “effective democratic contradiction aimed at eliminating later-stage harms, such as ‘disinformation’, depends upon the abolition and reinvention of the early-stage economic operations that operationalize the commodification of the human, the source from which such harms originate.”<sup>51</sup>

In her work, titled “Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology”, Anu Bradford comes to a similar conclusion. The author argues that, currently, the tech companies are not

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in *Our Information Civilization*, Sage Journals, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877221129290>, last accessed in 02.08.2024.

49. *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

50. *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

51. *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

effectively regulated and that “that tech firms are increasingly ‘new governors’ that “are exercising a form of sovereignty, even ushering in a world that will not be unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar but rather ‘technopolar.’”<sup>52</sup> Although the author is recognising that regulating these tech companies can be difficult, she also suggests that it would be imprudent to “write off governments and endorse a technological determinist view. [...] Governments have always been the fundamental political unit around which societies are built.”<sup>53</sup> In this *technopolar world*, Anu Bradford identified three Digital Empires, namely: the American Market-Driven Regulatory Model (centred on protecting free internet, free speech and incentives to innovate) the Chinese State-Driven Regulatory Model (centred on maximizing state’s power and the country’s technological dominance, positioning China as a global superpower, but also on surveillance and citizen control) and the European Rights-Driven Regulatory Model (centred on preserving the fundamental rights of individuals and the fair distribution of benefits from digital economy). The American market-driven regulatory model “developed around skepticism of government regulation and a fear that such regulation hinders innovation and reduces economic growth.”<sup>54</sup> China, on the other hand, “has come under increasing criticism in democratic countries, as the Chinese government systematically harnesses internet as a tool for censorship and political control. [...] China’s large-scale deployment of facial recognition techniques for law enforcement purposes is also

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52. Anu Bradford, *Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 379.

53. *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

54. *Ibidem*, p. 35.

widely condemned abroad. Its social credit scheme, which rates citizens for their trustworthiness based on issues such as paying taxes or committing a crime, is similar met with deep suspicion.”<sup>55</sup>

It is not the case in Serbia, however. “China and Serbia have also developed strong security relations. This cooperation has been visible in three forms: 1) police, 2) video surveillance, and 3) military- technical cooperation. [...] Apart from the creation of mixed police patrols in the larger cities of Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Niš) [...] due to its favourable geographical location, this largely reflects China’s realization that Serbia can be a veritable technological hub where it can test and implement its scientific and technological innovations.”<sup>56</sup>

What is The European Union doing to shape the digital transformation? The European Union “is not a powerless bystander forced to choose between its two rivals, but retains considerable power and influence in advancing its own digital agenda.”<sup>57</sup> The EU’ approach is focusing on a “human-centric AI legislation, aimed at establishing a framework that will be trustworthy, can implement ethical standards, support jobs, help build competitive ‘AI made in Europe’ and influence global standards.”<sup>58</sup>

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55. *Ibidem*, p. 9.

56. Vladimir Vučković, “The West is Dear, but the East is Dearer: Policy Pressures and Actors ‘Preferences in Serbia”, *Prague Security Studies Institute*, 30 May 2023, p. 9, <https://www.pssi.cz/publications/101-the-west-is-dear-but-the-east-is-dearer-policy-p pressures-and-actors-preferences-in-serbia>, last accesses in 03.08.2024.

57. *Ibidem*, p. 361.

58. The European Parliament, “Shaping the digital transformation: EU strategy explained”, *The European Parliament. Topics*, 19-10-2023, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20210414STO02010/shap>

The perspectives outlined above leads us to conclude that there is this growing consensus around leading thinkers around the world that “a political order that has the ability to shape core ideas of political life”<sup>59</sup> must return. Many scholars, such as those mentioned above, align with the idea that we need to bring the governments back in. For example, Gary Gerstle’s argument is that “the neoliberal order persuaded a large majority of Americans that free markets would unleash capitalism from unnecessary state controls and spread prosperity and personal freedom throughout the ranks of Americans and then throughout the world. Neither of these propositions today commands the support or authority that they once posed. Political disorder and uncertainty reign.”<sup>60</sup> John Ikenberry also admits that “as liberal internationalists have learned and relearned, modernity has two faces. The face of human advancement is technological change, economic growth, rising standards of living, and the constant revelation of shared interests and fates. But modernity’s other face is economic depression, war, totalitarianism, reactionary backlash, and the sudden discovery of vulnerabilities.”<sup>61</sup>

In addressing the “the sudden discovery of vulnerabilities” Ikenberry’s solutions for liberal democracies in mastering modernity are, first, to (1) “rebuild the social contract at home and

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ing-the-digital-transformation-eu-strategy-explained, last accessed in 02.08.2024.

59. Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and fall of the Neoliberal order. America and the World in the Free Market Era*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, p. 297.

60. *Ibidem.* pp. 297-298.

61. Ikenberry, *op. cit.* p. 290.

renew the international rules and norms that balance openness with social stability”<sup>62</sup>; second, with respect to relations with the liberal world, for Ikenberry the key is to “renew and defend liberal democracy within like-minded states and to strengthen the institutions, functionality, and legitimacy of the liberal order”<sup>63</sup> [...] and to “renegotiate the hegemonic character of liberal internationalism, or, short of this, build a post-hegemonic consortium of like-minded states that could collectively underwrite a reformed liberal order.”<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, while Ikenberry views technological vulnerabilities as a by-product of liberal democracy, Zuboff argues that the concentration of control driven by digitalization advancements translates into surveillance regimes that compete with democracy, and that only liberal democracies can actually pose an existential threat to these regimes. Both agree that the current liberal order needs to be reimagined. Technology, like pandemics, is not particularly concerned about national borders. As shown above, the U.S. is exporting the private power of its tech companies. China is exporting primarily the infrastructure, and the Europeans are exporting their regulatory power. Bradford seems to confirm Ikenberry’s vision of how future relations with the illiberal world should be in order to save the current modern liberal internationalism. She argues that we are already witnessing the emergence of a bipolar digital world of like-minded powers: techno-democracies

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62. *Ibidem*, p. 296.

63. *Ibidem*. p. 302.

64. *Ibidem*, p. 303.

vs. techno-autocracies<sup>65</sup>, i.e. a block of authoritarian countries is aligning with a variant of the Chinese model, while democratic nations are gravitating towards the European rights-driven approach: “as democratic governments are turning away from the American market-driven model, they are increasingly embracing the European rights-driven model as an alternative way to govern digital economies.”<sup>66</sup>

### **What solutions and what sort of security for Serbia and Montenegro?**

In what follows, our research tries to discuss the recurrent topics related to security in the cases of Serbia and Montenegro. The discussion is structured by the following questions: *Who are the security providers in Montenegrin perception? Who are the security providers in Serbian perception? What referent of security is prevailing in the Serbian and in the Montenegrin discourse? Which of the following approaches on security (national, societal or human security) are rather emphasized in political discourse?*

Opinion polls conducted in the Western Balkan countries, Montenegro and Serbia included, reflect different views on security. Montenegro is a NATO member state and its perception on national security is linked to NATO membership and EU integra-

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65. Bradford, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

66. *Ibidem*, p. 28.



tion aspirations. In contrast, in Serbian perception, trust (in terms of military and economic protection) is strongly linked to Russia and China, to a lesser degree to the European Union and almost not at all with NATO.

This part of the chapter is built on the following research data, opinion polls, surveys, and barometers: “Western Balkan Regional Poll” (published by the US-based *International Republican Institute*), “Attitudes towards security: Perceptions of security and threats in the Western Balkans” (published by the Western Balkan *SecuriMeter*), “Between East and West Democracy, Disinformation, and Geopolitics in Central and Southeastern Europe” (released by the NGO *National Democratic Institute*), *Balkan Defense Monitor*, *New Lines Institute*, *European Western Balkans*, and *Balkan Insight*.

The Montenegrin national security strategy focuses on “protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Montenegro; internal stability, protection of life and property of citizens and economic goods; and protection of democracy and rule of law, and guarantee and protection of human rights and freedoms.”<sup>67</sup> The main principles of national security policy are linked to collective security, commitments to the “development of military capacities and capabilities necessary for the execution of dedicated missions and tasks in the country and within the collective security system”, and to NATO membership, by developing “capabilities in line with the NATO defence planning process.”

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67. *Strategic Document – Montenegro – 2024*, Balkan Defence Monitor, <https://balkandefencemonitor.com/strategic-document-montenegro-2024/>, accessed in August 2024.

Moreover, Montenegro acknowledges “that the best guarantee of long-term and sustainable security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state is access to the collective and cooperative security and defence system brought about by NATO membership” and declares as “key prerequisite for protecting Montenegro”, the “active participation in the collective security system, NATO activities, missions and operations.”<sup>68</sup> Another declared “key foreign policy goal” by Montenegro is accession to the European Union, because “EU membership will further improve the security climate in the region and strengthen Montenegro’s capacity to respond to current challenges, risks, and threats.”<sup>69</sup>

As far as Serbia is concerned, the national security strategy is centred on “preserving sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; preserving internal stability and security; protection of the Serbian people wherever they live; preserving peace and stability in the region and the world; European integration and membership in the European Union.”<sup>70</sup> The ambivalence in the Serbian cases revolves around the issue of EU integration: it is presented as key national interest (meant to contribute to the “improving national security and defence” of Serbia), but, at the same time, opinion polls indicate a decrease in Serbians’ desire to join the EU. In contrast to Montenegro, however, the main aspect of military strategy is neutrality and the firm statement is that

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68. *Ibidem*.

69. *Ibidem*.

70. *Strategic Document –Serbia – 2024*, Balkan Defence Monitor, <https://balkan-defencemonitor.com/strategic-document-serbia-2024/>, accessed in August 2024.

“the Republic of Serbia does not intend to become a member of NATO or any other military-political alliance.”<sup>71</sup>

The different views in foreign policy or regional and international security are based on the fact that Montenegro is a NATO country, ever since 2017, whereas Serbia is not willing to join it. As far as the EU is concerned, both countries have been assigned candidate status, but the Serbian public opinion is less and less interested in joining the European Union or are losing trust that the EU is really committed to the Western Balkans (as will be shown in the analysis below).

Economic security and energy security are prevailing themes in most opinion polls. When asked “which four of the following have the most negative impact on your feeling of security?”, 56% of respondents in Montenegro believe the causes to be economic crises, poverty, social exclusion, while 65% of respondents in Serbia identify the same causes.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, since the war in Ukraine began, security threats related to energy, given the huge dependence on Russia in this sector (67% of imports)<sup>73</sup>, are salient issues in most surveys and respondents’ concerns.

The trust in EU and EU accession displays key differences between all Western Balkan countries, including Montenegro, on the one hand, and Serbia, on the other hand, as shown by a regional public opinion poll from 2021. When asked “what is your

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71. *Ibidem*.

72. Western Balkans SecuritiMeter, “Attitudes towards security: Perceptions of security and threats in the Western Balkans”, Regional Cooperation Council, 2022, p. 28, <https://www.rcc.int>, accessed in August 2024.

73. *Ibidem*, p. 15.

opinion about the European Union?", in Montenegro 57% of respondents are favourable, 18% unfavourable while in Serbia only 28% are favourable and 40% are unfavourable.<sup>74</sup> The question "if the referendum for EU membership of your country was held this Sunday, how would you vote?" displays even more convincing facts: in Montenegro, 77% would vote *for*, 14% *against* while in Serbia 50% would say *for* and 37% *against*.<sup>75</sup> In 2022, however, a poll conducted in Serbia showed that the number of Serbians who are against joining the European Union was higher than those who were still interested in EU accession, namely as many as 44% of participants declared they were against membership while only 35% were in favour.<sup>76</sup> Going back to the poll from 2021, when asked "if the referendum for EU membership were held this Sunday, but joining the EU also means spoiling / ruining the relationship with Russia, how would you vote?", in Montenegro 59% people said they would vote *for*, 25% *against* while in Serbia only 28% said they would agree and 58% would be against.<sup>77</sup> Another regional recent player, China, also indicates strong sentiments in Serbia:

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74. "Between East and West. Democracy, Disinformation, and Geopolitics in East and Central Europe", Public opinion research on Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, National Democratic Institute, July 2021, p. 24, <https://www.ndi.org/publications/between-east-and-west-democracy-disinformation-and-geopolitics-central-and-southeastern>, accessed in August 2024.

75. *Ibidem*, p. 25.

76. Katie Dartford, "For first time, a majority of Serbs are against joining the EU", *Euronews*, April 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/2022/04/22/for-first-time-a-majority-of-serbs-are-against-joining-the-eu-poll>, accessed in August 2024.

77. "Between East and West ...", p. 26.

the strategy according to which our “country should not follow its European path if it means spoiling its good relations with China” indicated that 52% Serbs agree while only 22% of Montenegrins do agree (and 63% believe that the country should follow its European path even if it means spoiling its good relations with China).<sup>78</sup>

Another interesting issue pertaining to trust in international actors stems from the following questions: “in your opinion, which state or international institution supports your country the most?” In Montenegro, the EU represented 43% (back in 2018) and dropped to 31% in 2021; USA was placed in 12% of answers (in 2018) and decreased by 2021 to 7%; NATO represented the response of 9%, in 2018, and only 4%, in 2021, while Russia decreased from 13%, in 2018, to 11% in 2021.<sup>79</sup> Oddly enough, trust in NATO decreased after Montenegro joined the organization, but as we shall see, it has been fluctuating ever since. Moreover, a grain of salt is needed here, given the fact that usually in-between 45-51% of the population in Montenegro identifies as Montenegrin and around 30-32% as Serbian.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, many answers could hide ethnic perceptions and perspectives. In Serbia, the situation is quite different, when it comes to trust in regional and international actors: EU represented 13% of answers in 2018 and then

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78. *Ibidem*, p. 27.

79. *Ibidem*, p. 38.

80. See Mirosław Dymarski, “Political Situation Of Ethnic Minority Groups In Independent Montenegro”, *Studia Środkowoeuropejskie I Bałkanistyczne*, 2017 / XXVI, pp. 205-219; <https://minorityrights.org/communities/serbs-4/>, accessed in August 2024; Western Balkans Regional Poll, February–March 2024”, International Republican Institute, p. 79, <https://www.iri.org/resources/western-balkans-regional-poll-february-march-2024-full/>, accessed in August 2024.

dropped to 9% in 2021, USA dropped from 2% to 0, China was the only one increasing from 12%, in 2018, to 24%, in 2021, while Russia represented 50% of choices in 2018 and 42% in 2021.<sup>81</sup> When combining some of the answers, the poll indicates the following: in 2021, 42% of people in Montenegro looked towards EU, USA and NATO, whereas in Serbia, 66% of respondents looked towards Russia and China.

We shall continue with more recent opinion polls, so that we can analyse the trends. In 2024, a Western Balkan opinion poll investigated perceptions about security, democracy and human rights, trust in politicians and institutions, foreign relations and foreign influence, NATO integration and EU integration. The question “what should our country’s foreign policy course be?” generated the following responses in Montenegro: 36% said *Only pro-European Union and the West*, 14% said *Pro-Western but keep up relations with Russia*, 17% *Pro-Russian but keep up relations with the European Union and the West*, and 3% answered *Only pro-Russian*. There were different answers in Serbia: 10% said *Only pro-European Union and the West*, 14% said *Pro-Western but keep up relations with Russia*, 27% *Pro-Russian but keep up relations with the European Union and the West*, and 12% answered *Only pro-Russian*.<sup>82</sup>

As far as relations with NATO are concerned, responses to one question distinguishes between the two countries, namely “in your opinion, our country’s future is best served by having

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81. “Between East and West ...”, p. 40.

82. “Western Balkans Regional Poll, February–March 2024”, International Republican Institute, p. 79, <https://www.iri.org/resources/western-balkans-regional-poll-february-march-2024-full/>, accessed in August 2024.

what kind of relationship with NATO?": in Montenegro 41% said *Full membership* in 2022 and 39% said the same in 2024, whereas in Serbia 3% said *Full membership*, both in 2022 and 2024.<sup>83</sup> When asked "how do you view the role of NATO in the world?", in 2024, 24% of people in Montenegro said *Mostly positive* and 31% said *Somehow positive*; in Serbia, in contrast, the respondents' perceptions indicated 2% and 8% respectively.<sup>84</sup>

European integration is also an important issue. The question "if a referendum were held today on our country joining the European Union, how would you vote?" showed optimism in Montenegro, where 71% said they would vote to join in 2022 and 79% said the same thing in 2024. There is pessimism in Serbia on the same topic: 44% declared they would vote to join the EU in 2022 and the number dropped to 40% in 2024 (with 34% declaring they would vote to not join).<sup>85</sup> There is also pessimism related to the EU's enlargement fatigue. When asked "is the European Union serious in its intention to offer membership to Western Balkan countries?", only 30% of people in Serbia believe this to be the case; the number is almost double in Montenegro, where 59% are confident about EU's intentions.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, there is more trust in economic relations with Russia and China in Serbia. The question "which of the following statements best describes Russia's motivations to invest in our country?" generated the following answers and percentages in 2024: in Serbia, 47% answered *Russian investment is primarily about economics, delivering*

83. *Ibidem*, p. 97.

84. *Ibidem*, p. 99.

85. *Ibidem*, p. 101.

86. *Ibidem*, p. 102.

benefits to both sides and 11% said Russian investment is primarily about influence and control of our country; in Montenegro, 26% said Russian investment is primarily about economics, delivering benefits to both sides, 34% answered Russian investment gives some economic benefits to our country, but it always carries certain political expectations and conditions and 23% believe that Russian investment is primarily about influence and control of our country.<sup>87</sup> The same question, but regarding China's economic involvement, displays even more trust: in Serbia, 53% of people answered Chinese investment is primarily about economics, delivering benefits to both sides and only 9% said Chinese investment is primarily about influence and control of our country.<sup>88</sup>

In the debate on future EU enlargement in the Western Balkans, the case of Montenegro is not necessarily indicative of the situation of the entire region, but it may be regarded as the closest case to eventual membership.<sup>89</sup> According to Corpădean, the size of the country creates a deceptive feeling of simplicity around the subject, but there are various factors that render Montenegro's EU file interesting.<sup>90</sup> As shown elsewhere<sup>91</sup>, the case of Montenegro stands

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87. *Ibidem*, p. 108.

88. *Ibidem*, p. 111.

89. Adrian Corpădean, "Assessments and prospects for the integration of the West Balkans. The case of Montenegro", *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, 2018/25, pp. 86-105. See also Adrian Corpădean (ed.), *A Model of Transference of the EU Integration Experience: from East-Central Europe to the Western Balkans*, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2023.

90. *Idem*, « Les fondements de la bonne gouvernance au Monténégro dans le contexte de son intégration euro-atlantique », *Synergies Roumanie*, 2019/14, pp. 55-67.

91. Laura M. Heța, "In the EU we Trust! The Role of Civil Society in Policy Making and Europeanization in Montenegro", *Civil Szemle*, issue 77,



out, in terms of candidate country from the Western Balkan region, because the process of Europeanization, albeit with shortcomings, exposes genuine EU values, norm incorporation, and trust in EU integration. In contrast, the case of Serbia illustrates the highest decline in positive perception of EU integration/ membership from 2010 to 2023. In Montenegro, negotiations with the EU are perceived as a normal, beneficial process for the country, not only as a logical and rational decision-making option for a state from the Western Balkans, but also as a will to accept and incorporate a set of EU rules because they are valid, legitimate and necessary. As declared by Đorđe Radulović, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2020 until 2022, “corruption should be fought for the well-being of the citizens, not for compliance with the EU requirements. [...] “People care for justice.”<sup>92</sup> According to Zorka Kordić, who has been appointed Montenegro’s new Chief Negotiator with the European Union back in 2020, “we have been constant in the decision of joining the EU”.<sup>93</sup> The argument that we build in this sense is that Montenegro is undergoing a process of pre-accession Europeanization, despite setbacks and difficulties.

In Serbia things are different. There is pessimism regarding EU integration, there is not much trust in NATO and USA, Europeanization seems to be stalled, and there is more optimism regarding economic relations with Russia and China. According to NGOs, the perception is that “there is no civil society as a clear entity, supportive of the EU; those who are critical against the Govern-

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4/2023, pp. 151-165.

92. Interview taken by one of the authors in Podgorica, in 2021.

93. *Ibidem*.

ment are persecuted.”<sup>94</sup> Other views stress the need for “internal Europeanization”, but fear that there is a “coalition of unwillingness”: the Serbian society is caught between enlargement fatigue and immaturity and intransigence of Serbian political leaders. All this generates a standstill: “nothing will happen in the next ten years.”<sup>95</sup> In what regards Serbian-Kosovar relations, interviews conducted in Serbia indicate an unresolved trauma, the equation of the “West” (and a pro-European path) with the recollection of NATO’s actions against Belgrade in 1999.<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusion

Data shows that both Serbia and Montenegro are preoccupied with issues related to national security, but also to societal security, economic and energy security, and even human security. The factors which contribute to national security concerns are mostly triggered by the Russian aggression against Ukraine, but Serbia also seems to be still haunted by NATO airstrikes and US support for Kosovo Albanians, back in 1998-1999. Serbia’s option for neutral security is

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94. Interview taken by one of the authors with member of former Serbian European Integration Office of the Government of Serbia, in Belgrade in 2021.

95. Interview taken by one of the authors with the former member of the Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union.

96. See more in Laura M. Heřa, “Does Social Learning lead to Reconciliation in Serbian-Kosovar Relations? The Role of Civil Society in Serbia”, *Civil Szemle*, issue 75, 2/2023, pp. 53-68.

embedded in the country's national security strategy. In contrast, Montenegro is committed to "collective security systems" and to NATO's "defence planning process". The energy security sector is also impacted by the Russian war in Ukraine and concerns about the two countries' dependence on Russian gas are often voiced. In terms of regional security and economic developments, both countries acknowledge the EU as the most important partner, but Russian and Chinese investments are also encouraged and trusted in Serbia. The perceptions of people tend to support the two national strategies, but they also reveal concerns related to societal security (which is to be expected in the Western Balkan region after the violent break-up of former Yugoslavia, during the 1990s) and also issues pertaining to development, economic security and human security. Therefore, the Russian war against Ukraine has brought back the Realist state-centric arguments and the idea of survival, as key national interest, but many global threats and developments brought about by globalization still make the people-centred views, in terms of security, as important as state-centred ones.

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# THE CASE OF MOLDOVA



# Soviet Legacy in the Republic of Moldova

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*Sergiu Musteață*

## **Introduction**

The relationship between past and present in the Republic of Moldova is a special issue because the totalitarian regime left a deep imprint on the collective memory. Today, the Republic of Moldova faces several dilemmas, including the attitude of citizens towards the Soviet legacy. Moldova's transition from a totalitarian to a democratic political regime is quite difficult. That is why distancing oneself from the traumatic past and memory can only be achieved by knowing, owning, and assuming the mistakes of this inhuman regime.

## **Transition from totalitarianism to democracy**

With the collapse of the USSR, 1991 was a promising start for the Republic of Moldova in the process of gaining independence and establishing a democratic state. Since the early years of independence, the Republic of Moldova has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified international human rights conventions, liberalized the media, acceded to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, initiated the first reforms to move to a market economy, etc. These legislative measures have adopted the basic values of a democratic state, and the 1994 Constitution institutionalized the rule of law in the Republic of Moldova. Three decades after that debut, we can say that the road to building and asserting state independence has proved very difficult. For many, the question remains: why is the transition of Moldova from a totalitarian to a democratic political regime so difficult? Several answers to this question are generated by the nature of political, economic, social, and cultural reforms. One of these answers concerns the field of history and collective memory and what the totalitarian communist regime meant for the citizens of Moldova. The perception of the past is conditioned by the experience and knowledge of each individual, of each family and community, etc. Although the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) tried to build a society that was egalitarian in all respects, views of this regime were and remain different. After the events of August 1991, it was believed that the Soviet Union had

collapsed and had finally broken away from its totalitarian past, but the reality was different.<sup>1</sup>

More than three decades have passed since the collapse of the USSR and Moldova's adoption of the Declaration of Independence, but a large part of the population is nostalgic and would like to return to the USSR.<sup>2</sup> Another part of the citizens support the integration of the country into the European community. A November 2011 opinion poll shows that more than 60% of respondents think it would be better if the Republic of Moldova were governed by a single party, with 73% saying it could be the Party of Commu-

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1. Luke March, *The Moldovan communists: from Leninism to democracy?*, Glasgow, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 2005.

2. The Republic of Moldova is no exception, the phenomenon of nostalgia being characteristic of most post-socialist states. For south-eastern European countries, this phenomenon has a specific name - *Jugonostalgia*: Larisa Kurtović, *Jugonostalgia on Wheels: Commemorating Marshal Tito across Post-Yugoslav Borders. Two ethnographic tales from post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina*, "Newsletter of the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies", University of California, Berkeley, Spring 2011, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 2-13, 21-23. See more details on the phenomenon of nostalgia in other publications: Maya Nadkarni, Olga Shevchenko, *The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-socialist Practices*, „Ab Imperio”, no. 2, 2004, pp. 482-518; Thomas Lahusen, Peter H. Solomon (eds.), *What Is Soviet Now?: Identities, Legacies, Memories*, Berlin-Hamburg-Münster, LIT Verlag, 2008; S. Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia*, Cornell University Press, 2009; Maria Todorova, Zsuzsa Gille, *Post-communist Nostalgia*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2010; Maria Todorova (ed.), *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation*, New York, Social Science Research Council, Columbia University Press, 2010; G. W. Creed, *Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2011; Mirela-Luminița Murgescu, "Romanian Perceptions of Communism", *Euxeinos*, no. 3, 2012, pp. 5-13.

nists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM). When asked “Which political system is better for the Republic of Moldova?”, 35.20% think it would be “the Soviet system that existed until the 1980s and 1990s.” In the same context, 45.6% of respondents opt for the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union and only 33.8% for the European Union, while over 45% are against the country joining NATO.<sup>3</sup> Among the nostalgic is former Prime Minister Dumitru Braghis (1999-2001), who believes “that the USSR had to be reformed on confederation principles.”<sup>4</sup> The antagonistic tendencies in the society regarding Moldova’s orientation towards Russia or the EU were also characteristic of the policy of the communist regime, which was restored in 2001 and lasted until 2009. Thus, in the 2001 election campaign, the PCRM actively promoted the idea of Moldova’s accession to the Russian-Belarusian Union, in the 2005 elections it radically changed its position and opted for integration into the European Union, and then, in 2011 to be precise, it returned to the idea of Moldova’s accession to the Eurasian Union. Moldova’s political oscillations and the lack of a clear and sustainable political choice have created a state of uncertainty among its citizens regarding the present and the future. This indecision or dilemma between East or West has led the Republic of Moldova to take one step forward and two steps back over the last twenty years and in most cases. Although the political class in Chisinau

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3. *Barometrul Opiniei Publice, noiembrie 2011*, Institutul de Politici Publice, Chișinău, 16.11.2011.

4. Pavel Păduraru, *Cine ne-a făcut cei mai săraci din Europa?*, <http://www.timpul.md/articol/cine-ne-a-facut-cei-mai-saraci-din-europa-30257.html> (accessed 01.05.2024).

wanted to build a state based on the rule of law, the Soviet legacy is always a hindrance or a way of delaying the process of creating a truly democratic society.

To these polls can be added several statements or political slogans made during the protest rallies organized by the PCRM against the ruling coalition, such as those of 4 and 11 February 2012, when slogans such as “Молдавия – русская страна!” were chanted. (Moldova – Russian land) and “Наша родина – СССР» (Our homeland – USSR). In recent years this discourse, as a result of the decline of the PCRM, has been taken over by the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova. Respectively, there has only been a migration of the PCRM electorate to the PSRM, which essentially has not changed its attitude towards the Soviet past.

In a 2018 survey on the relationship of Moldovan citizens with the Soviet past, the answers were similar to those of 2000-2011 – 49.1% regretted the dissolution of the USSR, and 40.1% of respondents will vote to include Moldova in the USSR.<sup>5</sup> A question related to the accession of Moldova to the European Union or accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (Customs Union), from a Survey of 2023 47% of respondents are in favour of joining the European Union and 32,5% are for joining the Customs Union.<sup>6</sup>

Officially, the Soviet Union ceased to exist on December 25, 1991, but Dan Dungaciú's question remains – “You can get Moldova out of the USSR, but how do you get the USSR out of Moldo-

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5. <https://ipp.md/2018-12/sondajul-sociologic-barometrul-opinieii-publice-noiembrie-2018/> (accessed 08.05.2024).

6. <https://ipp.md/2023-09/barometrul-opinieii-publice-septembrie-2023/> (accessed 07.05.2024).



va?.”<sup>7</sup> Today, the Republic of Moldova continues to face problems that have their origins in the totalitarian communist regime and are not so easy to overcome. Distancing oneself from the communist past and coming to terms with the traumatic memory can be achieved by acknowledging and taking responsibility for mistakes. What has the post-totalitarian political class done in this regard?

### **Distancing from the past and the totalitarian mentality**

Decommunization is a phenomenon characteristic of most of the countries that were part of the communist bloc in the context of their transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime. In the process of state-building, the Republic of Moldova has taken several steps to break away from its totalitarian past. Immediately after the attempted coup d'état in Moscow on 18-21 August 1991, the authorities in Chisinau condemned the GKCP initiative as “a serious state crime directed against the sovereignty of republics, which may cause enormous harm to the people”. Taking into account the fact that Communist Party leaders were involved in or supported the actions of the pucist committee, the Parliament adopted a resolution on the Communist Party of Moldova, banning

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7. Dan Dungaciu, “Poți scoate RM din URSS, dar cum scoți URSS din RM?”, *Timpul*, 4.06.2010, <http://www.timpul.md/articol/poti-scoate-rm-din-urss-dar-cum-scoti-urss-din-rm-11664.html> (accessed 30.04.2024).

“the activity of the Communist Party of Moldova on the whole territory of the Republic.”

Monuments reflect the ideology of a political regime and are, in fact, instruments of its ideology. The totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were perfectly in line with this tradition, and monuments contributed directly to their construction and maintenance. On 25 August 1991, therefore, the Presidium of the Parliament adopted the Resolution ‘On the liquidation of monuments and other attributes of communist ideology’, the deadline for which was 5 September 1991.<sup>8</sup> This decision was applied superficially, with only the monuments of Lenin, Marx, and Engels being moved from the central square of Chisinau to the Exhibition Centre “Moldexpo” (Photo 1). The rest of the Soviet monuments remain standing to this day. The failure to fully implement the provisions of the 1991 decision means that the problem of monuments to the Soviet regime persists to this day. A recent article notes that after three decades of independence, the Republic of Moldova remains “a grandiose Soviet museum without a roof”, and that the number of monuments embodying Lenin is greater than the number of monuments to Stephen the Great and Holy, considered a national symbol. During the Soviet period, some 4,000 monuments to Lenin were erected in the Soviet SSR, only a fraction of which have been removed from public view. As a revenge, during the communist ruling period (2001-2009), the monuments that had been disman-

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8. Hotărârea Prezidiului Parlamentului Republicii Moldova, nr. 688-XII din 25.08.1991.

tled were reinstalled in some localities: Ocnita, Lipcani, Rascani, Edinet, Dondușeni, Otaci, Fălești, etc.<sup>9</sup>

The situation of the monuments of the communist regime did not change after 2009 when pro-European parties came to power. Many local communities still support the communist ideology and worship Soviet monuments. For example, in the summer of 2023 the Lenin monument in the centre of the village of Bratuseni, Edinet district, was destroyed and the local administration shortly restored it (Photo 4-5). Thus, for a large part of the population of the Republic of Moldova the communist slogan is still valid: “ЛЕНИН ЖИЛ, ЛЕНИН ЖИВ, ЛЕНИН ВЕЧНО БУДЕТ ЖИТЬ!” (Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live forever!).

The condemnation of the totalitarian past of the Republic of Moldova arouses the discontent of a certain category of people, especially those who were formed and strongly dogmatized during the communist regime, and for the parties that declare themselves successors and followers of communist ideas means depriving them of the symbolic support of their ideology.<sup>10</sup> In 2004, President V. Voronin, by presidential decree, established the Commission for the Protection of Monuments of History and Culture. This decree is a relevant document aimed at intensifying “activities to protect historical and cultural monuments”. It empowered the Commission, in cooperation with the local public administration, to draw up an action plan for the registration and documentation

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9. Ion Urușciuc, “Lenin îl bate pe Ștefan cel Mare”, *Timpul*, 14.01.2012, <http://www.timpul.md/articol/lenin-il-bate-pe-stefan-cel-mare-30290.html> (accessed 30.04.2024).

10. „Lenin – o dilemă mirositoare”, *Jurnal.md*, 23.04.2010.

of historical and cultural monuments, memorial sites, and military cemeteries (1941-1945) and the creation of an electronic database of these monuments. So far, there are no clear results of the work of this commission.<sup>11</sup>

However, on 18 June 2008, Artur Cozma, Minister of Culture, came to Parliament with a proposal to include in the Register of State-protected Monuments five monuments of the communist regime: those of Grigore Kotovski, Sergei Lazo, "Fighters for Soviet Power", "Komsomol's Heroes" and "Liberators from Fascist Occupation" (Photo 2-3).<sup>12</sup>

Another finding concerns the attitude of citizens toward communist values and symbols.<sup>13</sup> The demolition of the totalitarian past arouses the discontent of certain categories of people (especially those who were educated and indoctrinated during the Soviet period) and of the parties that claim to be the successors of communist ideas, who see themselves deprived of the symbolic support they have had for decades.

However, the historical and cultural landscape is constantly changing, and the current government's intentions to make certain changes are justified because democratic society has nothing in common with the symbols of a totalitarian regime such as the Soviet one. However, each monument is also a part of the art of

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11. Decretul președintelui Republicii Moldova privind constituirea Comisiei pentru problemele ocrotirii monumentelor de istorie și cultură (Decree of the President of the Republic of Moldova on the establishment of the Commission for the protection of monuments of history and culture), 8.09.2004.

12. V. Basiul, "Moaștele bolșevismului", *Timpul*, 20.08.2007.

13. „Lenin – o dilemă mirositoare”, *Jurnal.md*, 23.04.2010.

the era in which it was built, which is why they should not be destroyed but moved from public places to specially designed museum spaces to show the descendants of the totalitarian era.<sup>14</sup>

## Condemning communist crimes

In February 2006, a group of MPs from the “Moldova Noastră” (Our Moldova) Alliance came to the Moldovan Parliament with a legislative initiative on the condemnation of the crimes of communism, as provided for in Resolution 1481 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe but the ruling communist majority did not support it.

After the political changes in 2009 in the Republic of Moldova, a similar initiative was taken by the then interim President Mihai Ghimpu, who, on 14 January 2010, by Decree No. 165-V, established the Commission for the Study and Assessment of the Totalitarian Communist Regime in Moldova. Between 14<sup>th</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, the Commission drew up a report, which was submitted to interim President Mihai Ghimpu and was to be discussed in the Moldovan Parliament. After two unsuccessful attempts in June 2010, the presentation date was postponed indefinitely by members of the Alliance for European Integration.

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14. Octavian Eșanu, *Iconoclash in Chisinau: Wings versus Torches, or the Rock-Paper-Scissors Dialectics*, 2010, <http://contemporary.org/text/view/16> (accessed 30.04.2024).

On 24-25 May 2010, the National Association of Young Historians of Moldova, with the support of the Soros Foundation Moldova, organized in Chisinau the international conference "Democracy after totalitarianism – lessons learned in the last 20 years". Experts from the USA, Canada, France, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova discussed the legality, consequences, and impact of totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as ways to overcome the legacy of totalitarian regimes today. PCRM representatives held a rally in front of the conference venue on 25 May 2010, chanting slogans such as "Stop political violence!", "Anti-communism is fascism", "Down with Ghimpu!", "No to fascism! Down with the Ghimpu Commission!" The photos of the Alliance for European Integration leaders were accompanied by the message "Hitler, Mussolini, and Antonescu are proud of you."<sup>15</sup> The public manifestation of PCRM representatives towards an academic event showed disrespect, but also a vehement refusal to discuss topics related to the past communist regime, being an expression of totalitarian extremism, which violates legal norms.

By another presidential decree, issued in June 2010, Mihai Ghimpu declared June 28, 1940, the day of Soviet occupation. The interim president argued that "we demand that our neutrality be respected. The decree was issued after 70 years, and during this time there were foreign troops on the territory of our country, that's why we asked the Russian Federation to withdraw its soldiers

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15. Sergiu Musteață; Igor Cașu, (eds), *Fără termen de prescripție. Aspecte ale investigației crimelor comunismului în Europa*, Chișinău, Editura Cartier, 2011.

and weapons.” The Russian State Duma’s condemnation of Mihai Ghimpu’s decree was a new Russian interference in Moldova’s internal affairs and shows that Moscow continues to treat it as part of its sphere of influence, trying not only to influence but also to control the situation in Chisinau through economic and political blackmail.

The issue of distancing the Republic of Moldova from its totalitarian past has a pronounced political character. The decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010, which declared the decree of interim President M. Ghimpu unconstitutional, is proof of this. Oleg Efrim, then Deputy Minister of Justice, the Government’s representative at the Constitutional Court, said that “the decree does nothing more than recall facts already established”, referring to the Declaration of Independence, in the final part of which the Republic of Moldova, as a sovereign and independent state:

“calls on the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to begin negotiations with the Government of the Republic of Moldova on ending its illegal state of occupation and to withdraw Soviet troops from the national territory of the Republic of Moldova.”<sup>16</sup>

We also recall the official position of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, expressed on July 7, 2010, on June 28, 1940, which it considered as the day of Soviet occupation: “Archival documents

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16. <http://unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=21129> (consultat la 13.07.2010).

and historical research by international experts show that the annexation of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia was conceived and carried out by the Stalinist Soviet command as a military operation to occupy these territories. And the decree of interim President Mihai Ghimpu reflects, in principle, the historical truth.”<sup>17</sup>

The Constitutional Court did not take into account other normative acts of the Republic of Moldova which already expressed the attitude of state institutions towards the date of 28 June 1940. Thus, by the Decision of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldovan SSR ‘On the Opinion of the Commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldovan SSR on the Political-Legal Assessment of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty and the Secret Additional Protocol of 23 August 1939 and their Consequences for Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina’ of 23 June 1990<sup>18</sup>, the above-mentioned opinion was approved, the final part of which expressly states: ‘On 28 June 1940 the USSR occupied Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina by armed force, against the will of the population of these regions [ed. After the establishment of the Stalinist Soviet regime in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, crimes against humanity were committed in these lands: mass murder, deportations, and organized famine. The final part of the decision states: “In accor-

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17. Avizul savanților „Cu privire la semnificația datei de 28 iunie 1940”, disponibil la [http://asm.md/?go=noutati\\_detalii&n=3183&new\\_language=0](http://asm.md/?go=noutati_detalii&n=3183&new_language=0) (accessed 13.07.2010)

18. Avizul Comisiei și Hotărârea Sovietului Suprem al RSS Moldova nr. 149-XII din 23 iunie 1991, semnată de M. Snegur, Președintele Sovietului Suprem al RSS Moldova, M. Cernencu, A. Petrencu, I. Șişcanu, *Crestomație la Istoria românilor, 1917-1992*, Chișinău, Universitas, 1993, pp. 245-249.



dance with the historical, legal, and political arguments set out above, all celebratory events are to be suspended on 28 June.” The opinion of the Chisinau Commission was based both on the recent results of historical research and on the decision of a similar commission of the Second Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR.<sup>19</sup> The decision stated unequivocally that the Soviet regime was an occupation regime, and by suspending festive activities on 28 June, it established its character of mourning and commemoration of the victims of the totalitarian regime. In the same vein, we recall that the government of the Republic of Moldova, led by A. Sangheli, declared the totalitarian communist regime an occupation regime as early as 1993. On 11 March 1993, the Moldovan government approved Decision No. 128 “On measures for the implementation of the law on the rehabilitation of victims of political repression committed by the totalitarian communist occupation regime (7 November 1917-23 June 1990)”. It is obvious that the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova is more unconstitutional, than the Decree of the interim President M. Ghimpu.

The Alliance for European Integration brought up the issue of banning communist symbolism after the November 2010 elections. At the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee for National Security, Defence, and Public Order on 2 February 2011, the draft law

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19. Hotărârea privind aprecierea politică și juridică a Tratatului sovieto-german de neagresiune din 1939 a fost adoptată de Congresul Deputaților Poporului URSS la 24.12.1989 (The Decision on the Political and Legal Appraisal of the 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty was adopted by the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR on 24.12.1989).

on banning communist symbolism was discussed and forwarded to the Bureau of the Parliament, which, by the end of February 2012, had failed to submit it for debate by the Legislature.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of 2010, six Eastern European states called on Brussels to introduce an EU ban on denying the crimes of communism, claiming that the victims of former communist regimes had been forgotten in Western Europe.<sup>21</sup> In 2011, several European countries officially equated communism with Nazism (Hungary, Slovakia, Georgia, and others).<sup>22</sup> If in Europe the crimes of communism are equated with those of fascism<sup>23</sup>, In Chisinau, the

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20. Igor Cașu, *Vor fi interzise simbolurile comuniste?*, „Adevărul”, 8.02.2011, [http://www.adevarul.ro/moldova/actualitate/Vor\\_fi\\_interzise\\_simbolurile\\_comuniste\\_0\\_423557738.html](http://www.adevarul.ro/moldova/actualitate/Vor_fi_interzise_simbolurile_comuniste_0_423557738.html) (accessed 09.02.2011).

21. “The principles governing European justice should ensure equal treatment for victims of all forms of totalitarianism,” reads a letter signed by the foreign ministers of Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, and Lithuania. The document is addressed to European Commissioner Viviane Reding. The signatories argue that trivializing or denying totalitarian crimes should be a crime, regardless of the regime responsible. Holocaust denial is already banned in many European countries. Former communist countries want to extend this ban from the crimes of the Nazi regime to those of communists across the East.

22. <http://www.lenta.ru/news/2011/06/01/charter/> (accessed 05.08.2011).

23. The Hungarian Parliament has equated the crimes of communism with the Holocaust. To deny the crimes of communism, a criminal penalty of one to three years’ imprisonment was introduced. The decision was adopted by a vote of representatives of the ruling party, the former right-wing opposition. Earlier, in February 2011, the Hungarian parliament passed a bill making Holocaust denial punishable by three years’ imprisonment. At the same time, the largest opposition party proposed punishing denial of the crimes of communism, but deputies rejected the proposal. <http://unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=20035> (accessed 09.02.2011).

attitude of the followers of left-wing ideologies is the opposite. One of them, M. Deljaghin, believes that “those who want to ban communist symbols are usually sympathetic to fascism or even belong to this political current.”<sup>24</sup> We can see that the decisions of the European structures or some states taken separately regarding their attitude towards totalitarian regimes are not taken into account by the left-wing parties in Moldova.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the issue of condemnation and acceptance of the totalitarian past in Chisinau remains a sensitive subject, which provokes new social and political confrontations, instead of facilitating a compromise to respect the historical truth.

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24. News on NIT television – [http://www.nit.md/index\\_md.php?action=news&id=3321](http://www.nit.md/index_md.php?action=news&id=3321) (accessed 0.02.2011).

25. See Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Resolution 1481(2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the need for international condemnation of the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes, 25 January 2006; Decision no. 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the programme “Europe for Citizens” to promote active European citizenship; Resolution P6\_TA(2008)0523 on the commemoration of the deliberate famine - Holodomor - in Ukraine, 23 October 2008; Council of Europe Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, 28 November 2008; Declaration of the European Parliament on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, 23 August 2008; European Parliament Resolution P6\_TA(2009)0213 on European Conscience and Totalitarianism, 2 April 2009; Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1723 (2010) on the commemoration of the victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) in the USSR, 28 April 2010T.

## Conclusion

Distancing the Republic of Moldova from its totalitarian past is a highly topical issue and, in all likelihood, difficult to resolve in the current political situation. However, the major problem remains in each of us, in our individual and collective mentality, and we should make more effort to show the true face of the totalitarian communist regime, which ‘represented the supremacy of lies’ (L. Kołakowski). Thus, the issue of distancing the Republic of Moldova from its totalitarian past still has a pronounced political character. So, we must do as the first Polish post-communist and anti-communist Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki proposed: “We must draw a thick line” over our past and make a consensual effort to build an open society”because closed societies are not sustainable. This situation does not give us any right to forget or deny our past.” A democratic society cannot be built on the denial of past crimes, abuses, and atrocities. Memory should not be privatized, our totalitarian past should rather be assimilated and overcome, as Adam Michnik said – “Amnesty Yes, Amnesia No.”<sup>26</sup>

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26. Vladimir Tismăneanu, referring to this situation, says: “We can break away from the Leninist legacy at the mental level only if we give up this culture of lies and duplicity...”. Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Despre 1989: Naufragiul utopiei*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2009, pp. 14-15, 31, 149, and 179.

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**Photo 4.** *Monument of Lenin in the Bratuseni village, Edinet rayon – vandalized in Summer 2023 (photo credit S. Musteata, 11.09.2023)*





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# Moldova and Romania. Narratives towards a Cultural European Integration

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*Gianina Joldescu-Stan*

## **Introduction and theoretical framework**

Cultural narratives play a crucial role in shaping national identities. A deeper understanding of the complex interplay between national and supranational identities can be gained by exploring how Moldova and Romania perceive and negotiate their cultural identities in the context of European integration. Moldova has declared itself culturally part of Europe and the EU, while Romania, as part of the EU, supports and implements EU strategies and plans for the protection of cultural heritage and cultural development as a driver of socio-economic development, as well as the

idea of a European cultural heritage. Romania benefits from EU funding for the cultural sector and for sustainable development while The EU supports cultural exchanges and cooperation between Member States and the Republic of Moldova and provides financial support for cross-border cooperation in the economic, political and cultural fields between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Throughout the article, the names Moldova and The Republic of Moldova are used interchangeably, as to reflect the ease with which in the Romanian language the two are not different from the point of view of most people's understanding of them.

This paper delves into the multifaceted elements that fuel the Republic of Moldova's aspiration to achieve cultural integration within the European Union. It also aims to delineate the nation's inherent strengths and potential vulnerabilities in this intricate process. From this vantage point, the cultural and historical parallels between Moldova and Romania emerge as pivotal, given Romania's potential to exemplify a model of exemplary practice in cultural integration for its neighbouring country. Consequently, the initial research question of this paper explores the shared heritage and enduring connections between Romania and Moldova. The subsequent research question endeavours to elucidate the underlying motivations behind Moldova's fervent pursuit of cultural integration and to identify strategies through which Moldova can optimally leverage its capabilities and resources to realize this ambition.

The study is based on a literature review of articles discussing the relationship between Moldova and the EU, the EU and its

member states, Romania and Moldova, as well as Moldova and its neighbouring countries that are part of the EU. The works of Tony Judt have been particularly revealing in this context. His book, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*<sup>1</sup>, provides an in-depth analysis of Europe's political, social, and economic transformation after World War II. Judt discusses the broader context of European integration, including the cultural and political challenges faced by Eastern European countries like Moldova.

From a methodological perspective, the article "Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach"<sup>2</sup> by Andrew Moravcsik from Harvard University, outlines the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism, explaining how national preferences and intergovernmental bargaining shape European integration. This framework can be applied to understand Moldova's aspirations and challenges in integrating with the EU.

## **Romania and Moldova – common heritage**

Romania's interest in Moldova is deeply rooted in their shared historical and cultural heritage. According to Adrian Corpădean,

1. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, Penguin Books, 2007.
2. Andrew Moravcsik, "Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1993, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1993.tb00477.x>, accessed September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.



this interest is also shared by other EU member states and the Union as a whole, particularly within the framework of the Europe 2020 Agenda, where the contribution of East-Central Europe is of significant importance.<sup>3</sup> Moldova, as part of East-Central Europe, plays a crucial role in achieving the EU's targets. This includes cultural integration, where Moldova's unique cultural heritage can contribute to the diversity and richness of the EU while also benefiting from the cultural exchange and support from other member states.

Many Romanians see Moldovans as fellow countrymen who were separated from Romania—first in 1812 when Bessarabia was annexed by the Russian Empire, and again in 1940 when these lands were taken by the USSR under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In Romania, Moldova's territories are often regarded as historically Romanian. This perspective shapes Bucharest's policy, treating relations with Chișinău as unique. Romanian political leaders frequently highlight their support for Moldova, emphasizing a shared national, cultural, and linguistic heritage. However, in practice, Romania's policy towards Moldova is often influenced by political pragmatism, including the desire to garner support from the Romanian electorate, among other factors.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, "Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Common Assets and Challenges amid the Europe 2020 Agenda", *The European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood Today. Politics, Dynamics, Perspectives*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2015

4. Kamil Calus, *In the Shadow of History. Romanian-Moldovan Relations*, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. Marka Karpia Centre for eastern studies, Warsaw, 2015.

While Romania has played a generally positive role in steering Moldova towards Western structures and has been effective in certain areas, such as the support provided in the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>5</sup> and energy supply accounting for about 80% of its current consumption (as of November 2022)<sup>6</sup> its overall impact on bilateral cooperation remains limited. The technical support from Bucharest has been inadequate, and infrastructure projects have experienced significant delays due to coordination issues among the relevant ministries. This has created a considerable gap between Bucharest's frequent declarations of support for Moldova and the actual results achieved.

From Chişinău's perspective, Romania is a vital counterbalance to Russian influence. The Moldovan groups that rose to power in 2009, advocating for European integration and a reduction in Russian influence, naturally turned to Bucharest, viewing it as an advocate for Chişinău within the EU. Similarly, the Communists, who governed from 2001 to 2009, adopted a moderately pro-Romanian stance after relations with Russia soured in 2003. Cooperation with Romania offers Moldova the potential to lessen its political, economic, and energy dependence on Russia. However, Bucharest's capabilities are limited: the Romanian market cannot replace the Russian market, and energy cooperation projects, despite

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5. Kamil Catus, "Moldova: record-breaking support for reunification with Romania", *Centre for Eastern Studies*, available online: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2021-04-19/moldova-record-breaking-support-reunification-romania>, accessed September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

6. Maia Sandu, cited by Politico, "Europe's security is at stake in Moldova", <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-security-ukraine-russia-war-at-stake-in-moldova/>, accessed September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

being promoted for many years, have had only symbolic effects. On the international stage, Romania is often seen as a representative of Moldova's interests in global organizations, as well as a source of financial aid and expertise necessary for implementing reforms. Domestically, the Romanian issue is a significant aspect of Moldova's internal politics, with various Moldovan groups exploiting it for their political interests, which in turn affects the state of relations with Bucharest.

Although cooperation between Romania and the Republic of Moldova is documented mostly on an economic level<sup>7</sup>, from a cultural perspective, Romania and Moldova share more than any other two European countries: from the key factor of national identity, which is the Romanian language, to traditional crafts and attire, recognised and celebrated by UNESCO<sup>8</sup> and cuisine, folklore and music, inspired by both Turkish and Slav cultures. In order to insist on the cultural similarities between the two, there is even a synchronization of certain cultural events organized in the respective countries.<sup>9</sup> Such cultural events include: Romanian Language Day, Nights of the Museum and Bookfest.

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7. Olga Bodrug; Adrian Petre, "Romania and the Republic of Moldova – a Long-Term Strategic Cooperation", *Economic Insights – Trends and Challenges*, vol. V, 2016, pp. 27-35.

8. UNESCO, "A Common History, A Common Heritage: The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (Alțiță) – An Element of Cultural Identity in Romania and the Republic of Moldova", Paris, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/shoulder-shoulder-celebrating-community-and-craft-woven-traditional-blouse-romania-and-republic>, accessed September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

9. Victor Chirilă, cited by MoldovaLive, "The synchronization of cultural events between Moldova and Romania promotes identity and cultural heritage", <https://moldovalive.md/the-synchronization-of-cultural-events-be>

## **Cultural Integration for Moldova. Why and how?**

Countries with similar background as the Republic of Moldova, such as Romania, Poland or Croatia, which are already member of the European Union, have presented notable successful transformations when it comes to their cultural journey. Poland is an example of successful Cultural European Integration, with its cultural reforms concluding to a new, strong cultural strategy, placing Poland as one of the most growing cultural scenes in Europe.<sup>10</sup> Poland's cultural reforms, initiated in 1989, gradually transformed its cultural sector by decentralizing and adapting to the free market. Despite initial challenges, including underfunding and outdated infrastructure, the influx of Western investments and grassroots initiatives led to significant advancements. By the early 2000s, systemic changes in cultural management and education resulted in new strategies, management methods, and cultural products, revitalizing the sector and engaging the public, all supported by the EU via funds and knowledge transfer.

Similarly to Poland, but on a smaller scale, Romania's cultural integration journey started after 1989 and continued stronger once it became a part of the EU. Because of their similarities, Romania has always been considered a model for integration for

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*tween-moldova-and-romania-promotes-identity-and-cultural-heritage-says-chirila/*, accessed September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

10. Culture and Creativity, *The story of exemplary successful European integration of Poland*, <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/article/poland-reforms>, accessed September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

the Republic of Moldova, but few papers touch on the subject of cultural integration. And it makes sense, because the elaboration of policies and the fulfilment of criteria is, at first hand, more important than cultural integration. And while Moldova can follow the steps Romania took in the process of Accession and Integration, it is important to also take into account the cultural component. Similar to Romania, the Republic of Moldova has faced difficulties in the cultural field, especially due to the lack of consistency of the authorities in the process of cultural and national heritage protection, as well as the lack of innovative measures for modernisation of the cultural infrastructure.<sup>11</sup>

This being the case, why would the Republic of Moldova want to culturally integrate in the European Union? Some of the answers may include economic benefits, facility for cultural exchange with other European countries, as well as the increasing mobility of people towards other rich and culturally diverse countries. EU provides sponsorships, grants and other types of monetary aids for cultural initiatives in new and less-developed member-states. This type of support could be the help Moldova needs in order to better aligned with other European countries in terms of cultural innovation and access to proper protection and promotion of its cultural heritage.

In matters of how, the issue becomes blurrier, as there is a strong connection between what Moldova can do with the resources it has, and the limitations it encounters without the resourc-

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11. Veronica Rotaru, Nicolaescu Irina, "The Peculiarities of the Cultural Diplomacy Activity of the Republic of Moldova in the Context of Realization of European Path", *Eastern Europe-Regional Studies*, 2019, <https://psage.tsu.ge/index.php/Easternstudies/article/view/118/pdf>, accessed September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

es it needs. In an interview conducted in 2023 by Open Society Foundation, Iulia Groza, executive director of the Moldovan think tank Institute for European Policies and Reforms, declared, with regards to the cultural integration of Moldova, that one of the best things the country can do is to enhance its language education, particularly English, German and French, such as to better facilitate communication and collaboration with EU counterparts.<sup>12</sup> According to the Council of Europe's Report for Cultural Policy Review of the Republic of Moldova. Towards a Strategy for the Development of Culture and Creative Industries<sup>13</sup> some of the main challenges Moldova must overcome for a better cultural integration are:

- ✓ At policy level: lack of data, strategic direction, and government prioritization; inadequate stakeholder consultation; regulatory gaps; limited capacity and understanding within the Ministry of Culture; insufficient inter-ministerial support and funding; demographic issues; trust deficits; and the absence of an independent body to manage sector funding
- ✓ At industry and Civil Society level: lack of established industry leaders, underdeveloped managerial and entrepreneurial capacities, insufficient status for freelancers, skill and infrastructure gaps, a limited domestic market affected by online piracy, missing regulatory frameworks to encourage invest-

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12. Iulian Groza, Open Society Foundation, Q&A: *Moldova's Path to a European Future*, 2023, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/q-and-a-moldova-s-path-to-a-european-future>, accessed September 11<sup>th</sup> 2024.

13. Council of Europe, *Cultural Policy Review of the Republic of Moldova. Towards a Strategy for the Development of Culture and Creative Industries*, Chisinau, November 2019, <https://rm.coe.int/cultural-policy-review-of-the-republic-of-moldova-towards-a-strategy-f/1680997eb5>, accessed September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

ment, poor integration with the tourism industry, underutilization of the Creative Europe program, and a lack of public spaces for showcasing art.

Despite these challenges, the expert of the European Council managed to also identify some strong opportunities Moldova has for cultural integration. At policy level, that would be the political will within the Ministry of Culture to establish cultural and creative sectors as a key pillar in the State Policy Moldova 2030, the plans to develop a comprehensive strategy with implementation and funding, and the donors support for the development of cultural and creative industries. At the industry and civil society level opportunities include the Artcor initiative in Chisinau, which aims to establish a creative hub linking universities, creative professionals, and businesses with the ICT community, as well as US Aid, which emphasizes developing creative goods and services for export. There is strong demand from the younger generation to make Moldova a cultural and creative hub. Additionally, the Culture and Sports Council in Brussels' conclusions on supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation can serve as guidelines for Moldova.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Romania's relationship with Moldova is deeply rooted in historical and cultural ties, shaping a unique yet prag-

matically driven policy towards its neighbour. Despite Romania's efforts in supporting Moldova, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and in energy supply, the overall impact on bilateral cooperation remains limited due to technical and infrastructural challenges. Moldova views Romania as a crucial ally against Russian influence and a representative in international forums, yet the economic and energy dependencies on Russia persist. Romania and Moldova share profound cultural connections, from language to traditional crafts and synchronized cultural events, underscoring their shared heritage. Moldova's path to cultural integration within the EU, while fraught with challenges such as inadequate policy direction and infrastructure gaps, holds significant potential. The political will within Moldova's Ministry of Culture, initiatives like Artcor, and support from international donors and programs like Creative Europe present opportunities for Moldova to enhance its cultural sector.

Ultimately, Moldova's cultural integration into the EU could bring economic benefits, facilitate cultural exchanges, and increase mobility, aligning it more closely with European standards and practices. Addressing the identified challenges and leveraging available opportunities will be crucial for Moldova to fully realize its cultural and economic potential within the European framework.



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## List of contributing authors

**Robert Belot** – Professor of contemporary history at Jean Monnet University of Saint-Etienne, France, coordinator of two master's programmes: History, Civilizations & Heritage, and DYCLAM + (Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree). Holder of the Jean Monnet European Chair "European Heritage Policies", he is a specialist in European geopolitics and heritage, who has taught to various audiences in France and abroad (Switzerland, Korea, China, United States) and has authored more than 155 publications. He has held operational positions in the French Ministries of Defense and Higher Education, notably in the Directorate of Memory, Heritage and Archives. He was deputy mayor in charge of Culture and Heritage. Coordinator of the Erasmus + ProPEACE Strategic Partnership, Robert Belot is also a member of the UMR Environment City and Society (CNRS / UJM).

**Adrian Corpădean** – Associate Professor (habil.) and Dean of the Faculty of European Studies at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. His research priorities include the EU integration of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, and the management of European resources in the broader region. He is professionally active in the area of European Communication and has led various research projects in his field of expertise, such as a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. Fluent in English, French and Italian, he benefits from international experience in terms of publications (over 70 authored), conferences and development projects. He is part of the editorial teams of several international journals focusing on EU integration studies, such as *Synergies Roumanie*, *Studia Europaea* and *Modelling the New Europe*.

**Giovanni Gugg** is Research Fellow at LESC (Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative, University Paris-Nanterre), CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique) and LAPCOS (Laboratoire d'Anthropologie et de Psychologie Cognitives et Sociales, University Côte d'Azur, Nice), and Teaching Fellow of Urban Anthropology, Department of Engineering, University 'Federico II', Naples, Italy. Giovanni holds a PhD in Cultural Anthropology, and his studies concern the relationship between human communities and their environment in terms of risk. His main areas of interest are the volcanic area of Vesuvius, the Italian seismic areas of Central Apennines and Ischia, and the city of Nice after terrorist attacks in 2016. Among his most recent publications are *Crisi e riti della contemporaneità* (2023), *Ordinary Life in the Shadow of Vesuvius: Surviving the Announced Catastrophe* (2022) and *Guarire un vulcano, guarire gli umani: Elaborazioni del rischio ecologico e sanitario alle pendici del Vesuvio* (2021).

**Monica Meruțiu** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations and German Studies at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Her research focuses on geopolitics, the role of religion in international relations, the philosophy of religion, and European identity. She is a member of the editorial boards for the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* (USA) and *Studia Europaea* (Babeș-Bolyai University).

**Anamaria-Florina Caloianu** is a PhD student at the International Relations Doctoral School at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She currently works as a research assistant on the REMIT Horizon project. In 2022, she presented her Master's thesis on the use of lawfare in the Aegean Sea conflict between

Turkey and Greece, focusing on the 1976 ICJ case. She is now writing her PhD thesis on Turkey and the impact of the 2016 events on foreign policy and relations with major regional actors.

**Eugeniusz Kuznicow-Wyszyński** – MA in Contemporary Diplomacy and European Studies at the University of Warsaw, graduate of the European Academy of Diplomacy and the Academy of Leaders of the Republic of Poland. NAWA government exchange scholarship holder at the University of Belgrade, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, Charles University in Prague and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Currently an employee of the Office for Foreigners in Warsaw. From 2022 a PhD candidate at the University of Warsaw in the discipline of Political Science and Administration. Doctoral dissertation focuses on analyzing the impact of the Karta Polaka on the legal and political status of the Polish diaspora in their countries of residence, particularly in the context of cultural integration and national identity. The research also covers the historical background of repatriation and contemporary challenges and dilemmas related to the national belonging of Poles living abroad. Research interests: repatriation and migration policy.

**Kudzai Cathrine Bingisai** is PhD Student at Babes Bolyai University, Romania. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and a Master of Science in International Relations from the University of Zimbabwe. Her research interests are international relations and negotiations, politics, globalization and gender.

**Alexandru Mocernac** holds a PhD in International Relations and European Studies. He works as an associate professor at the

Faculty of European Studies of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. His research interests focus on borders, cross-border cooperation, Romanian-Ukrainian relations, and the rights of national minorities. He recently published a book analyzing the impact of the European Neighbourhood Policy mechanisms on cross-border cooperation between Romania and Ukraine.

**Osman Sušić** is senior teaching assistant at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, department Political Sciences. Working on subjects: History of Bosnia and Herzegovina, History of southeastern Europe, Political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Military history, Studies of Holocaust and genocide, Leadership and security. PhD coordinator at Faculty of Political Sciences University of Sarajevo. He has published several scientific and professional papers and presentations in various magazines and anthologies. He participated in several scientific and professional conferences and symposia. As a guest lecturer, he presented individually and through international exchange programs at several European Universities (Universidad de Granada Spain, University of Valladolid Spain, Università di Trento Italy, Radboud University Netherlands, Charles University Prague Czech Republic, Palacky University Olomouc Czech Republic, Tor Vergata Rome Italy, Ca' Foscari University Venice Italy, Comenius University Bratislava Slovakia, Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica Slovakia, Ovidius University Constanta Romania, Babeş Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Mathias Corvinus Collegium Budapest Hungary).

**Berina Beširović** is PhD student at Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo where she accomplished her previous studies. She holds master's degree in political science,

international relations, and diplomacy and is currently working as senior teaching assistant. Beširović was awarded the “Gold Badge of the University of Sarajevo” as the valedictorian in 2018. Her field of interest includes: Theory of the State, Media and International Politics, Political System of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Constitutional Studies, European integration and Western Balkan studies etc. In September 2018, she published her first book on the topic: “The role of the institution of the High Representative in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995-2006)” in addition to nine scientific papers. Berina is currently finalizing her PhD thesis titled: “The structure of state power in the post-Dayton period: Perspectives and possibilities of Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the Dayton Peace Agreement”

**Laura-Maria Herța** has a Ph.D in History and is Associate Professor of International Relations and Vice-dean at the Faculty of European Studies in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is also senior Research Associate at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Politics and International Relations. Author of several books and articles on the history of Yugoslavia and the wars in Former Yugoslavia, as well as author of chapters and articles tackling humanitarian intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa, armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies in East and Central Africa, transformation of war. Interested in: peace and security studies, humanitarian intervention, the Balkan region, Sub-Saharan Africa, social-constructivist theorizing.

**Ramona Adriana Neagoș** has a Ph.D in the field of International Relations and European Studies, a master’s degree in Conflict

Management and a BA in International Relations and European Studies. Her scientific interests include: negotiations, mediation, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution.

**Sergiu Musteață** is a historian from the Republic of Moldova and a professor at the Valahia University of Târgoviște, Romania. He holds his PhD at the History Faculty of „Al. I. Cuza” University, Iași, Romania in 1999, habilitation at the „Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania in 2017, and another habilitation at the „Ion Creanga” Pedagogical State University of Chisinau, Moldova in 2021. He is a former research fellow of various scholarships in the USA (Fulbright scholar at the University of Maryland, University of California Berkeley and Stanford University), Germany (DAAD and Humboldt scholar at Bonn, Freiburg, and Braunschweig universities), Hungary (OSI scholar at the Central European University), Sweden (scholar of the Swedish Institute at the Campus Gotland, Uppsala University), Poland (Thesaurus Poloniae Fellowship at International Cultural Centre, Krakow), etc. He is the author of 10 monographs, more than 300 scientific publications, editor of over 30 books, and two scientific journals. His major academic interests are History of Eastern Europe; Cultural Heritage Preservation and History textbook analysis.

**Gianina Joldescu-Stan** is a lecturer at the Faculty of European Studies. Her interests are cultural development and patrimony, regional development and structural funds. She has a Master Degree in European Affairs and Project Management and a Bachelor Degree in International Relations and European Studies. She holds a PhD in International Relation and European Studies, with a thesis focusing on the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development.





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